

A MODEL FOR RACIAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE: ENCOUNTERING
GOD THROUGH WORSHIP
IN THE SAME PLACE AND
AT THE SAME TIME

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ABSTRACT

**A MODEL FOR RACIAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN
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by

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The objective of this project was to find effective ways to experience worship as a diverse congregation, under the same roof and at the same time. The methodology used was bible study, selected sermons, discussions on the foundational papers of the researcher, and a congregational survey. The methods used were seen as being successful because they provided congregational awareness and growth in diversity. The congregation is very active in inviting persons of every racial background and is very good at withholding their judgment of persons they do not know. This congregation lives out its' vision statement of, "open doors, open hearts and open minds."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I begin this endeavor of acknowledging the many persons who made this study possible, I first want to give thanks to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whom I have called on many times during this endeavor. A special acknowledgement goes to my wife and soul mate Jan Townsend Gardner, who has offered her support and encouragement. I want to acknowledge my son and daughter, Andre Jason and Patrice Gardner for the spiritual support they offered.

I want to acknowledge my mother, Ora L. Gardner, who has always been there for me. There is no love like a mother's love. To my siblings, Ethelyn, Doris, Dina, Amanda, Alex, Shirley, Eugene, Robert, Linda, Melvin, and Freddie, you have always been there for me in the good that I have done.

I acknowledge my mentors, Linda E. Thomas, Ph.D. and Robert C. Walker, D. Min. for their collective labor, guidance, and encouragement to aspire to acquire academic excellence. My professional associates, The Reverend Dr. William E. Salmon, D.Min., and Doris Wright Carroll, Ph.D., for their time, guidance and support.

A heartfelt thanks is extended to all the churches that have offered prayers and support during this journey.

Acknowledgement is most proper for each of my context associates, who labored, and conversed, and offered a great source of strength through prayer and assistance throughout the completion of the project. They gave a true sense of diversity and community. A special appreciation to Lorene Burch, Beverly Cole, Barry Collins, Debora Cox, Judy Kohardt-Hazelton, Dirk Hutchinson, Leo Lake, Eva Lankhorst, Han Lankhorst, Kathy Olson, and Vicky Price.

I want to thank my peer group for sharing philosophical, sociological, psychological and theological experiences during this journey. We made and shared a covenant with each other. We must remain in contact. Thank you, Allyson Abrams, Roland Bailey, Byron Grayson, James Nooks, Brenda Thomas, Margie Warden, Ronald Wells, and Johnnie Wilson. Also Shelia Brown, Meylon Clark, Dee Dee Coleman and Rick Hunter. Many thanks to each of you for your contributions of sharing, fellowships and empowerment. God bless each of you in your ministry.

This document would not have been possible had it not been for these two persons whose skills helped tremendously because I can only do papers long hand. Many, many, thanks to Melanie Boswick and Shari Murray. God Bless you for your help.

Finally, my acknowledgement is extended to the Doctoral Studies Program, faculty, and Staff of United Theological Seminary for providing the opportunity to pursue this degree.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my dad, the late William H. Posey. He was the person who inspired me to reach for the highest goals and to always to do my best in everything that I agreed to do. He taught to always serve God, all my life. This project is also dedicated to my siblings who have gone on to glory; Eva Franklin, who was one who said to stay in school after dad's death, to Lester Posey who always had an infectious laughter, to H.C. Posey, with whom I spent a great deal of time with in Los Angeles, to Warren Posey, who always said that I was his "big brother" and a great inspiration to him, and to Willie James, who was like a twin. Willie and I grew up together, played together, double dated together, had many of the same friends, he was my confidant.

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INTRODUCTION

When this researcher enrolled in United Theological Seminary (UTS), with a desire to gain insight in United Methodist leadership, he was invited to consider the Urban Development and Intercultural Communications Focus Group. This group was designed to educate leaders to design, implement and evaluate social and political programs. Included would be a focus on the intersection between ethnic/multi-racial aspects of culture and anthropology. Urban Development and Intercultural Communications is about community diversity being honored and embraced. It is about dialogue, so that each individual knows her/his talents and abilities are needed to make the community a better place for life to flourish. It is about the formation of an empowered citizenry who recognizes that it can and will make a difference in the community.

This project is an intentional effort on the part of this researcher and context associates of Trinity United Methodist Church in Salina, Kansas.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

**A Model For Racial And Cultural Diversity In Congregational Life:
Encountering God through Worship In The Same Place And At Same
Time**

The major focus of this ministry is to have a House of Prayer for all peoples. Isaiah reminds us,

And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath and do not profane it, and hold fast to my covenant, these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus says the Lord God who gathers others to them besides those already gathered. (Isaiah 56:6-8 NRSV)

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called the eleven o'clock hour on Sunday mornings the most segregated hour in America. Dr. King believed that church should play a fundamental role in shaping the morality and changing the prejudice of our society. This writer agrees with that statement and feels called to promote cross-racial ministry. Our churches have long been divided by confessional differences, but some of the deepest and most painful separations in American

congregations have historically mirrored rather than transformed racial difference in our society. In the experience of this writer genuine multi-racial community within congregations is illusive.

This writer believes that the challenge is to promote personal and structural change at a level of individual believers, congregations, judicatories, and the daily expression of congregational life. This writer, also believes that in order to accomplish these changes, the spirit of a multiracial community needs to be embraced by the whole of congregational life, which includes: worship, hospitality, evangelism, formation for all ages, pastoral care, and community witness.

In retrospect, as this writer looks at the genesis of the call from God, it was thinking beyond self that led him to hearing the call "to preach my word." This ministry became all-inclusive, with concern for brother, father, family and later all of God's people.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19 NRSV).

The Beginning of This Writer's Spiritual Journey

Ora Lee Gardner and William Henry Posey gave birth to this writer, Andrew Jackson Gardner, in Boling, Texas on November 1, 1944. This event was the second child to this union, ten more children followed. Growing up on a farm did not hinder the love this writer's family had for

one another. Both parents had minimal education, mother finished tenth grade, and although father only finished sixth grade, reading the newspaper was enjoyable, which led to preparation for the workforce.

As a family, there was always prayer around the breakfast table. On Sunday, the Sunday School lesson was read, prayer at breakfast, and then off to Sunday School and church. As the children grew older, they were asked to participate in the prayer at Sunday morning breakfast and also lead in the Sunday School lesson.

This writer never wanted to be the “baby boy,” however, for nine years and eleven days that was the title, and which he did not like. Wanting to be a man with responsibility was more important. Prayers for a brother and later dad guided this writer to the call into the ministry. This was the beginning of this writer’s spiritual journey.

Alex Charles, a younger brother had asthma as a child which was frightening, with near death episodes from chest constriction. It was very hard to see him go through the labored breathing, so this writer would always get up to see if assistance could be provided.

With every breath he took, it looked as if the family were going to lose him. This writer would always pray and bargain with God to put his brother’s suffering on him, feeling better to be able to handle this discourse.

During this writer’s junior year in high school, dad became ill and was rushed to the hospital. The family thought dad was going to die. Living in rural America, this writer went to the barn, selected a bale of

lay as an altar and knelt down and prayed to God to save dad; and, if God did save him, this writer would preach God's word for the balance of his own life. Somehow, after that prayer, confidence came; knowing that dad was going to live, then this writer could comfort the family. The family thought this writer had lost his mind, not seeing the seriousness of dad's condition. After two days in the hospital, with prayer, medication and doctor's care, dad returned home to recover his health.

Passing the Test

This writer graduated from High School, in May of 1963 and went to Houston that fall. Intentions were to get a job and prepare to go to college. While living with a sister and brother-in-law, a neighbor talked about a job, where the neighbor was a foreman on a railroad crew. Job testing for a labor gang job was done at the office headquarters.

Reasons for the type of test are unknown, because it had nothing to do with the work assigned to do on the railroad. However, it was exciting facing this first challenge of job testing and successfully passing. This was the reason for the importance of a high school diploma. The job wanted was attained, (because it paid more than the other jobs for which there was a qualification), and could save money to start college.

The Telephone Call

Some exciting things happened while working for the railroad. This writer's railroad schedule was 7:30 am until 4:00 pm. Following work, playing cards and dominoes with the high school juniors and seniors that lived in the neighborhood, was competitive and fun, and soon became a part of his daily routine.

After a few months of this fun, unsettling dreams began to occur. A calm and powerful voice spoke about "preaching my word," was heard. The dreams were ignored for a while; but one night the phone rang while dozing off to sleep and he could not answer it. His sister kept saying, "Answer the phone, you know it's for you." All that he remembered saying to her, "I can't," as she answered it.

This writer has vivid memories of the words spoken during that time, "Instead of preaching my word and learning of me, you come home and play dominoes every evening." Trying to get up was to no avail, it was as though someone was lying on this writer's chest and would not give allowance to get up. Life started to change, and later he was able to sleep peacefully. When telling his sister about the dream, she said "Boy, I think you been called," to which the reply was, "God knows what I want to do and preaching is not on the list." The focus was college; being in the "big city," where there were many people and many girls that were of no relation, and a readiness have *fun*. But all of that came to a screeching halt.

Through prayer and self-reflection, this writer wrestled with God regarding his call for nearly six months. His pastor's advice was sought out; who in turn gave reference, to talk to some other pastors to get their views. This writer announced the calling at the Clinton Park Methodist Church, Houston, Texas in the summer of 1964, went to college for one semester, and in the summer of 1965, was drafted into the United States Army. His pastor was really shocked there had not been a deferment like other students who were in college and committed to ministry. The draft status became One A while out working for that year and half. Somehow after college registration the Registrar's Office did not offer deferment papers, so classification was averted to the draft.

Army Days

This was another of God's blessings for this writer. The Army gave the opportunity to travel, to learn, and to gain the experience of meeting new people in other countries. As a family in a rural setting, there had been a sheltering and experiences of limited learning opportunities. Dad did not want any of his children to borrow money from the government to attend college. Consequently, going to the Army provided the opportunity to get the GI Bill, which assisted with tuition and fees. This writer served two years in the Army, spent thirteen months in Korea, and obtained the rank of specialist fifth class. Discharge from the Army was completed at Fort Ord, California.

After discharge this writer was disappointed, because he was not accepted at the University of Houston, but did not give up on the idea of going to college. He re-entered Texas Southern part time for one year, then, enrolled in Huston-Tillotson as a full-time student, finishing his studies in August of 1971. While in school, he worked at the Boy's Job Corp, remained until May '72, and marched with his graduating class that year.

Highs and Lows of Life

Following college graduation, this writer and his roommate moved to Dallas. During the summer, this writer held a job supervising youth at the City Co-op inner city youth employment program, which was a good job, but only for the summer. In the fall of this same year, this writer enrolled at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University.

At Perkins, this writer attained a position as a youth minister at a Euro/American church. Although the church really loved and admired this writer, they wanted a married youth minister. While not seriously dating and only going to movies with a classmate from college, the influence from the church caused the relationship to intensify to a higher level. A date was set for a December 1972 wedding, then moved it to October 7, 1972. This writer had a desire to do the things that were

being taught in seminary, however the future wife did not want pre-marital counseling and a consensual agreement was made.

After getting married, this writer also got a part time position at the United Methodist Outreach Center where people were aided with food and clothing. The seminary also provided a scholarship and a grant, which was beneficial in helping the newly wedded couple.

In her youth, his wife's doctor told her she had some type of illness and would not live beyond age twenty-five. Together, many medical trips were made and Doctors renewed the previous diagnosis.

In the spring of 1973, the numerous trips were interfering with studies and an incomplete was received in one class. The Faculty Academics Committee asked this writer to take a leave from the Seminary, until the family situation was in order. Doctor's discovered the cause of the wife's health concerns during that semester and an appeal to the Committee's decision was made. Meeting with the chair of the committee to plead the case, was to no avail.

In July of 1974, at age twenty-nine, this writer's son was born. There are no words adequate to express the love, joy, excitement, and happiness felt over the birth of his son. The desire was for him to have his own identity, so he was named Andre` Jason, and his first six nights at home were spent sleeping on his father's chest.

The first years of André's life were saturated with all the attention one could give to a child. There were several times this writer would

keep his son and send his mother on vacation. When Andre` started to school this writer was working at the Texas Youth Council as a Field Service Counselor (Parole Officer). This writer took pride in getting his son dressed for school every day until he was able to dress himself.

God had blessed this writer and his wife, with a healthy son. A memory this writer will always have is praying in the hospital, just after the son's birth, that God would hold him in God's hand and would guide this writer as his dad. It would have been easy to make the mistake of making an idol of his son, so prayer for God's guidance at his birth was important as well as necessary.

After counseling with an Elder in the conference, this writer enrolled at the Brite School of Theology at Texas Christian University, with a full scholarship, and continued to work full time for the Texas Youth Council until the summer of 1981. Good evaluations were always given for work, but things started to change after this writer trained the new supervisor. It appeared she had been hired to get rid of him.

One afternoon in June, the new supervisor came in and told this writer she was going "to fire me" and wanted the keys to the office. This is the only time in life that this writer had been released from employment. Driving home from the office to his home, in Dallas, Texas, a decision to speak with an attorney was made. The attorney recommended a negotiation with them, as a lawsuit would be a very long process. These calls were made and this writer submitted a formal letter

of resignation. A letter of recommendation from them had not been asked for, nor needed. After occasional stops to visit them and offer to do volunteer work, the supervisor later stated, that she was forced to do what she did.

This writer enrolled in Brite full time in fall '81 and graduated in May 1982. After graduation, an appointment was made to a church that was strong in its Central Jurisdictional years, and he was ordained Elder in June 1983. His wife did not embrace the move to Waco, which caused a growing apart. When Andre` was eleven this writer and his wife divorced. Relocation to Kansas from Waco, Texas came the following year. However, if given the opportunity to relive the move, the choice would have been to remain in Texas. Although, this writer and his son Andre` were very close, the move to Kansas was painful to both father and son, with an absence of a necessary adult male figure. This experience has aided in counseling to other men and parents. God has been good to this writer and guiding openness with Andre`. This has helped to foster a good relationship.

This Writer's Cross-Cultural Ministry

The writer's first church appointment was a cross-racial congregation as a youth minister in Dallas, Texas. This was a great learning experience.

After moving to Kansas, for five years, with an appointment at an African American Church, there was always a feeling that God was calling me to serve in a cross-racial setting. This writer believes that God calls us as a "community of faith" to be one body and one people. Scripture reminds the people of God, "All are precious in God's sight." This writer strongly believes as Dr. Martin Luther King said, "We will live as brothers or perish as fools."

Since June 1991, this writer has mainly been involved in cross-racial appointments. It is his belief that it is important for the people of God to live out a life of inclusiveness, being the ones to model the way and will of God. A church must live out its biblical and theological principles, believing that "God is no respecter of persons." We need to be able to live as brothers and sisters and as a body of Christ.

In the last four years, this writer has received appointments to four churches with one appointment being a two-point charge. In all these appointments there have been good, positive relationships and an openness that has been strong and supportive. The key in any cross-racial appointment is the role of the bishop and the cabinet. Also, the support of the Staff Parish Relations Committee is paramount.

" . . . As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord"
(Joshua 24:15 NRSV)

This writer's life has been a spirit filled journey. He feels blessed by the opportunity of being called and sent by God into the vineyard of

ministry. May God continue to bless and keep others who exercise this particular call in ministry.

On February 29, 1992, this writer married his present wife, Jan Townsend. This relationship is free of stress and drama. We are very supportive of each other and enjoy serving God in the communities of residence.

Early in life, this writer suffered with stomach ulcers and was told by doctors that they were a result of stress. Now life is relatively stress free; enjoying travel, ministry, and serving the needy, with wife Jan.

It is this writer's desire to grow in service of God and neighbors. He has a strong passion for ministering to all of God's children. Wherever he is, and wherever he goes, he does his best to serve the Lord in word and deed. He is thankful for what God has done for him, for God's continued guidance, and the wonderful journey together.

In this project, this writer will consider the relationship he has had over the past several years as an African American pastor in cross-racial/cultural settings. He hopes to be able to model ways in which persons of different cultures can worship together as one. As an African American pastor, this writer wants to model servant leadership and what it means to have a "happy hour" for all people.

It has been this writer's premise over several years that God calls "every nation" into God's Kingdom. He feels that there is a need for us as a people, to learn how to become the one people (community of faith) that

God calls us to be. This will not happen until the people begin to know something about each other. We cannot learn about each other until open dialogue exists with each other. In Ephesians, Scripture reminds, that there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, to whom we are united in one faith and one baptism. It does not matter where the baptism occurred, in a black church or a white church. Coming together for worship cannot happen until there is an opening up of ourselves to the Holy Spirit in honest dialogue and fellowship with each other. When we speak of "call to ministry" or call, this writer feels strongly that one has to have a sense of call in order to be involved in cross racial ministry. One motivating factor has been the statement that Rodney King; an African American who was abused by California policemen, made several years ago when people in California continued to riot after his arrest several months later. He said, "Can we all get along?" This writer's quest has been to encounter God in all people and situations.

This writer's desire is to follow Jesus as the watershed of his life. The desire is to transfer from that relationship to the love for others, while answering God's call. It is in this process of transference where a passion for loving, living and working are found.

This writer recalls A.H. Maslow's theory of need gratification. Maslow states that the key to developing one's potential to the fullest degree is in the gratification of basic needs that develop in a hierarchical sequence from lower to higher needs that emerge. These needs are

described as: physical needs, such as the need for food and water, safety needs, a place free of threats to life and provides a sense of security (shelter); belonging and love needs, which is felt in hunger for affection, accepting relationships with other persons; self esteem, illustrated by the desire to be respected by others for one's accomplishments and the quest for recognition and prestige. Once these needs are met, one's energies will be free for self-actualization.¹

Maslow suggests that the actualization of self cannot be sought but can be a by-product off commitment of one's talents to some cause outside the self, such as the quest for aesthetics, beauty, truth and justice. Finding a purpose allows one to dedicate his/hers energies and talents to its fulfillment.² Over the last twelve years, this writer's ministry has been exclusively cross-cultural. A strong belief in God is the purpose called for, which has not been an easy task. There is a clear understanding that there is nothing easy about dealing with any group of people. God did not promise that any part of ministry would be easy.

Over the past twelve years, this writer has gained an appreciation for multicultural diversity. There is a need for methods of teaching and preaching and learning about the spirituality as expressed by persons of different racial, religious and social economic backgrounds. This need exists in the United Methodist Church and also in different

¹A. H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York, New York: Harper, 1954).

²Ibid.

neighborhoods. As a people of God, there is a need to grow in an understanding of open dialogue and “oneness” that should exist within the people of God. As people of God, there is a must to meet the challenge of what it means to understand, live and worship with others as a community of faith. Efforts must continue to help the secular community witness the church community worshipping and praising God together regardless of race, and socioeconomic status.

Time and situation after situation have proven that color continues to be a barrier to open admission to social, political, and economic institutions of society. For this reason, there is a must to continue to discover, teach, learn and model ways of celebrating diversity and fellowship. As a follower of Jesus Christ, this writer is pained by the fact, “the most segregated hour is the eleven o’clock hour on Sunday morning” as said by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In the arenas of sports and entertainment the success of African Americans is much more visible. Positions of leadership in the United Methodist Church are critical to the harmony and unity of the United Methodist Church.

The cooperative effort of this writer’s vocation and content for his ministry will result in the design of a theoretical model that will witness the way in which people of different cultures, races, and socioeconomic status can express their encounter with God under the same roof at the same time. This effort will be a method to promote harmony and unity between people of different cultures and races.

Finally, the following words from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. help the researcher to hold to the ministry of all people. He said,

Power with love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.³

Love and power are central to God; so they must be central to all who walk in God's way and strive for justice. When Dr. King spoke of love and power, he was talking about the "connective tissue" that holds all Christian life together. As the people of God work to build multiracial congregations, it is an exercise in love and power. For people to come together across racial differences not only requires sharing in God's great love; it also gives us the power to accomplish human community, hopefully and intentionally, despite inner turmoil or outside conflict. Christians are called to live in communion with each other, to be transformed for the sake of one another and the world.

It is the hope of this writer that the methodology used in this project will help the context become a House of Prayer and for all peoples. It is also hoped that Sunday will be a weekly visual reflecting the success of the church living up to its ideal of racial justice and racial inclusion.

³Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., *Address to Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (Atlanta, Georgia: August 16, 1967).

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

The researcher's passion is people. The researcher loves all of God's children and believes all should be under one umbrella when worshipping God.

One of the first steps of building multiracial community is the telling of stories, which not only unmask the various levels of history within a congregation, but shows how the experience of an institution differs when it is told from varying perspectives.¹

A model for dialogue is another method that will be used in this project. The dialogue is intended to lead groups through a five level change process that begins with diversity awareness and concludes with examining intentional racism.

The five level change processes are as follows:

1. Appreciating Diversity-Deconstruction.
This level of the process explores the history and contribution of different races and cultures. The goal is to appreciate and value racial and cultural difference. At this level participants learn to recognize difference as valid and move to trust and

¹Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, *A House of Prayer For All Peoples, Congregations Building Multiracial Community* (Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 2002), 7.

value difference as a positive dimension of human society. "People are equal but not the same."²

2. Prejudice Reduction–Behavior Analysis.

This level examines the nature and consequences of prejudice and stereotyping. The goal is for individuals to move toward reducing their prejudicial attitudes and behaviors. Participants enter this level of change with some cultural sensitivity and appreciation of diversity, as well as with some awareness of the nature of prejudice. It is at this level that participants are first able to distinguish between "appreciating diversity" and "racial justice," because it is the behavior that justifies prejudice and reinforce white privilege that support the perpetuation of racism. Here in the midst of a supportive environment participants are asked to examine their prejudices in an effort to change oppressive attitudes and behaviors.³

3. Power Analysis–Social Constructivism.

This level examines how people are socialized into racism and calls for visioning antiracist structures. The goal is for participants to recognize the power shifts necessary for an antiracist reality to exist. This step moves participants beyond the realm of interpersonal behaviors and beliefs and introduces them to power analysis. Given that racism is a social construct, it is imperative for participants to realize which interpersonal change is positive, with structural change racism will continue to be perpetuated within our (religious) institutions and in society as a whole.⁴

4. Visioning–Anti Oppression.

This level examines the interrelationships between various forms of oppression, and challenges participants to change oppressive systems. While

²Ibid., 36.

³Ibid., 37.

⁴Ibid., 37.

envisioning a reality without racism in church or community can give participants the opportunity to utilize skills in power analysis, the experience often brings a degree of fear.⁵

5. Reconstruction-Institutional Racism.

This level calls for persons to ask questions of the institutions and to change racist structures. Who is included and excluded? Who holds power and who does not? This stage is focused on the implementation of a new vision in concrete terms. Participants realize that racism is inherit in our institutions and to facilitate change, action is necessary. Focusing on sustainable action, participants at this level of the change process acquire the personal support they need to work toward a true multicultural community.⁶

The term dialogue is used not simply as a conversation between two persons. It is an interchange of thoughts, feelings, and beliefs on a common subject between two or more persons of differing views. The primary purpose of dialogue is for each person to learn from the other so that he or she can change and grow. The "dialogue process" is the structure sequence and techniques used to facilitate a dialogue between persons or groups.⁷

Preaching is very important in the multicultural context. Eric H.F. Law reminds us that,

... the preacher has a lot of power and influence during the preaching moment in a church service. This

⁵Ibid., 38.

⁶Ibid., 39.

⁷Eric H. F. Law, *The Bush Was Blazing, But Not Consumed, Developing a Multiracial Community Through Dialogue and Liturgy* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 1996), X.

power can be misused and abused if the preacher does not spend the rest of the week listening to, observing, and receiving from the people he or she serves. The preacher must spend time to become powerless before she or he can preach with power and authority.⁸

Tex Sample, Professor at St. Paul School of Theology, stated at the 1994 Kansas East Annual Conference, "It is important for the preacher to pitch tent and live among the people."⁹

Law gives four disciplines for the preacher to follow in a multicultural context. The four disciplines are:

1. Listen to the people in our church communities—not just those whom we like. Listen to the different cultural groups in your community—the different racial and ethnic groups, age groups, gender groups, economic groups and so forth.¹⁰
2. Listen to yourself. Be aware of your own feelings and reactions to different events in your own life, in your church community, and in the society. Be able to stand outside yourself and see yourself as others see you. Get behind the obvious and ask what caused you to feel or react the way you did. Be open to exploring events in your life that have impacted who you are. Be open to being surprised by what you might find out about yourself that you had not thought of before. Know your values, beliefs, and recurring patterns of behavior and thinking. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Know your power and authority in relation to others. Know your angel—how it is good, fallen, and in need of redemption. Be aware of the God-concepts that drive you. Be open to other God—

⁸Eric H. F. Law, *The Word at the Crossings, Living the Good New in a Multicontextual Community* (St. Louis, Missouri: Charlie Press, 2004), 104.

⁹Tex Sample, *1994 Conference Preacher, Kansas East Annual Conference*.

¹⁰Eric H.F. Law, *The Word at the Crossings, Living the Good New in a Multicontextual Community* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2004), 104.

concepts that might bring out a different side of you.¹¹

3. Listen to the Society in which your church community resides. Read a local newspaper and a national paper. If you have one, read an international paper that might give you a different perspective on world issues. Watch a local television news program daily to find out what is going on in the local community. Watch a national news program to find out what is happening around the world. You are not going to be able to do that with the busy schedules of most preachers. But, make a discipline to do as much as you can, and if you notice that a particular issue was raised by what happened in the world and in the local community, do some research into the issue as part of your weekly discipline in preparation for preaching. Learn the power relations between different groups in your local community regarding this particular issue. Make sure you listen to the powerless groups in your society, because the discovery of truth begins there. Get to know the beliefs and values widely held in your society.¹²
4. The most important is to listen to the Scripture. Read the lectionary text at least one week before the Sunday you preach it. Before doing any research on the texts read and listen to them a few times. Listen for how these texts connect, affirm, or challenge you personally. What event or experience do these texts evoke in you? If you're drawn to one of the texts, write down some initial thoughts and do some research, such as exploring the literary, cultural, and historical contexts of the texts, and also do some word study. Hold them in your mind for the coming week as you listen to yourself, your church community, and your society. Watch for connections between the texts and the lives of the

¹¹Ibid., 105.

¹²Ibid., 106.

people in your church community. Pay attention to how the biblical text affirms and/or challenge different groups in your church community. Watch for support and challenges that the biblical texts issue for your society.¹³

Law reminds us that,

... the sermon should continue by issuing an invitation for the people to bring their own contexts to bear and to arrive at their own conclusions as to what they will do. The final invitation, if you know there will be differences in opinions, is for them to engage one another in dialogue, because it is through dialogue that we may discover the truth together. Preach the truth—which is the process that models the pattern of Christ’s approach to issues. And let the divine truth make the judgment, not you. Let the gospel be the prophetic utterance, not you. The energy of a diverse community must be redirected toward the center, the gospel of Jesus Christ who is the way and the truth, conviction and re-conversion will happen. The job of the preacher is to showcase the gospel and to provide the invitation and the process for them to enter into discovering the divine truth. Therefore, preaching must be accomplished with educational opportunities for people to continue their learning and discernment of the truth.¹⁴

The church needs to read and understand Scripture, so the study of the Bible is important.

Bible Study

Invite a group of people with diverse backgrounds to study scriptures together. Invite participants to listen and connect with the biblical text from their own perspectives and share their insights. When

¹³Ibid., 106.

¹⁴Ibid., 112.

studying biblical text that has references to other similar texts in the Bible (especially among the gospels), read those texts together and invite the community to explore these questions:

- a. Why were there differences among the texts?
- b. What were the different contexts from which these texts emerged? Can you speculate what kind of communities and issues these different texts were trying to address?
- c. How were these contexts similar to or different from your own context?
- d. What does this text say to you now?

Start a community Bible Study group during the week and study the biblical text that you will be using for your sermon on the upcoming Sunday. Make sure the makeup of the group is diverse in gender, age, economic status, education, race and ethnicity, representing members of your community. Do not make yourself into an expert even though the participants might want you to tell them what the text means, but rather be only one voice, one context among many in the group. Most importantly, listen to the participants, their connections with the text, their relationship to God, their stories and yearnings. In preparing the final version of the sermon keep the different contexts and stories in mind.¹⁵

The focus of bible study must be on listening to how each person connects with Scripture and learning what concerns they have on their minds. The importance of preaching is for the word and will of God, to be emphasized. Two sermons from the Biblical Foundations will be used.

¹⁵Ibid., 39.

These methods will be used in the project with hopes of measuring some behaviors and practices of a community seeking to be multicultural.

Randy Woodley reminds us in his book, *Living In Color Embracing God's Passion for Ethnic Diversity* that, "the only thing that will allow us to embrace each other and celebrate our differences is for each of us to catch a glimpse of God's heart and embrace each other."¹⁶ The United Methodist General Commission on Religion and Race takes a similar stand in a document, *The Ministry of Racial Reconciliation*. This document informs us of ways to bring out biblical healing. Both Woodley and the General Commission of Religion and Race agree that healing begins with "confession, forgiveness, repentance and reconciliation."¹⁷ This researcher believes that crossing the cultural and racial boundaries lies in the heart of the gospel. In order for us to effectively do ministry in multicultural racial setting, we are required to take the opportunity to listen to each other, study together, pray together and to worship together.

The General Commission on Religion and Race is clear that healing starts with the grace of God. "Without washing ourselves fully in God's grace at the beginning of our journey, we cannot face the hard, kingdom

¹⁶Randy Woodley, *Living In Color, Embracing God's Passion for Ethnic Diversity* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2001), 16.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 163.

building work of reconciliation.”¹⁸ It is clear with both this document and Randy Woodley that there is a need for the Spirit of God to be present with us and for us to take the opportunity to listen and talk to each other.

They remind us to take the opportunity for confession. They remind us, “that confession is not simple. We must intentionally engage in learning and listening before we can make a complete confession. Confession requires that we fully understand the different forms of racism and their manifestation in the world.”¹⁹ We are called as a body of Christ to make a confession to one another, we are reminded, “Therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed.” (*James 5:16 NRSV*). We need to look at both our institutional and personal complacency and guilt. Sin is against God and ultimately must be taken to God. We can never substitute forgiveness from each other for God’s forgiveness unless God is part and parcel of the equation. At the human level we were made to confess to one another as well. This cannot happen until we are dialoging with each other by being with each other.

The third step is Repentance. It has been translated as “a change of mind.”²⁰ Repentance is an attitude of the heart expressed in both

¹⁸The General Commission On Religion and Race, *The Ministry of Racial Reconciliation* (Washington, District of Columbia: Draft form, 2005), 6.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 6.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 6.

words and deeds. It means to turn the opposite direction. The community of faith should rejoice when minds and hearts are changed. Some will question whether repentance is genuine if the wrongdoer refuses to restore something that has been taken away. "Repentance is best received if there is some sort of sacrifice involved. It requires a sacrifice of time, money, prestige, and status on behalf of equality. It is the action taken to repair a wrong. It is the manifestation of truly turning away from sin and building a new way of life."²¹

The fourth step is forgiveness. Forgiving is to pardon your brother or sister. Forgiveness is part of God's great nature of mercy that when sincere confession is made, those who have been offended do not have a right to withhold forgiveness, any more than God does. When we follow God in obedience, the offended party must bless the offender. We are reminded to, "Love your enemies do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you" (*Luke 6:27-28 NRSV*). "In forgiveness, we seek to know, feel, and understand what another person knows, feels, and thinks. Until forgiveness occurs, relationships cannot be restored."²²

The last step is reconciliation. "Reconciliation is based on the foundational act of the Christian faith: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is being restored from sin to God. This gives us hope

²¹Ibid., 7.

²²Ibid., 7.

that we can be restored to one another.”²³ It is up to the church to create a safe space for reconciliation to take place. The church is the inclusive family of God. It is the cause for which Christ lived and died. When people are reconciled to God and to one another across the lines of age, class, culture, gender, nationality, race and status we get a clear picture of what the church looks like.

It is the firm belief of this researcher that when the church can sing, pray, worship and do ministry together, relationships can be restored and we can build a just society.

²³Ibid., 7.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

God's heart for people from every nation, tribe, and tongue on earth is unmistakably portrayed throughout the Bible. From cover to cover, the Bible testifies that the heart of God is inclined toward people to be in communion with one another. Scripture is replete with glimpses of God's sovereign execution of gathering his people to himself.

Steve Kang reminds us that,

. . . the church is to be the central sociological institution for Christians to be (re)enculturated as kingdom citizens and its Christians formations must be characterized by a sense of authenticity community of kingdom citizens is through the formation of a faith community.¹

Christian formation entails inviting, creating space for the people of God to intentionally, habitually, and holistically engage in God given educational moments in all aspect of life, thus invoking the Holy Spirit to work in the community and the lives of the people of God through those transforming moments.²

¹Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang, and Gary A. Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom, Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Foundation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004), 80.

²*Ibid.*, 80.

It is clear to this researcher the faith community's approach is to employ itself as the context, content, and the method for Christian education and transformation. Learning the faith should happen as the members participate intentionally and unintentionally, in the activities (worship, bible study, mission) of the community.

Kang also states that,

. . . the Christian faith is best understood as a cultural linguistic system in which the canonical texts of Scripture function as the interpretive norm, and doctrine and theology function as the grammar governing communities of practice. This narratively shaped faith community or cultural-linguistic system provides and intelligible interpretation in its own terms of the varied situations and realities its adherents encounter. It also advocates a thoroughly social and communitarian vision of human life, thereby repudiating the individualism endemic to modern life and thought. The kingdom life of Christian experience is mediated through the language and practice of particular communities, and individuals have identity only within those communal contexts. The faith community approach to Christian formation thus advocates a return to Christian religious tradition and the task of interiorizing the values of particular communities. Yet those Christian faith communities are committed to conversation with participants of other Christian traditions regarding shared concerns, each bringing to the conversation the distinctive voice of its tradition.³

³Ibid., 85.

Kang goes on to say that,

... what is critical for the faith community is re appropriating Christian traditions, re-envisioning the nature of ministry of the church and it's formational responsibility and exploring ways to live out that life of faith authentically in the present.⁴

He informs us that we can,

... foster theological and ethical inquiry in the community. People should be encouraged to bring their belief to a conscious level and then to examine those beliefs in light of their knowledge of the world and society.⁵

Womanist theologians should be invited to engage in these inquiries. These theologians expose,

... racism, sexism, and classism of the American society and the church reveals how the systematic oppression of African-American women throughout history has impacted the livelihood of those women.⁶

The faith community must invoke itself in the struggle of social justice. As we struggle with these issues in our faith communities we come to realize that we are inextricably bound together and that our lives are incomplete unless committed to and shared with a faith community. This is how we as Christians begin to recover together one aspect of the image of God. We are exhorted to know ourselves together through God's love as kingdom citizens as we are known by God in God's infinite love.

⁴Ibid., 86.

⁵Ibid., 86.

⁶Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1989), 195.

This chapter will bring together the strands of biblical, historical, and theological foundations in an attempt to show God's concern for a multicultural community of faith.

The Biblical Foundation

The focus of this paper is to show that as people of God we are called to live in communion and community with one another. How should we begin to look clearly and honestly at the diversity of the human family? As believers, Christians, and followers of Jesus Christ, the beginning and ending points of analysis must be from biblical principals. There is no clearer vision of racial inclusion and equality than that which is given in the Bible.

"The Gospel writers wanted it to be known that Jesus was raised in an environment that maintained Jesus' own cultural and religious identity, yet was enriched by the influence of various Gentile cultural elements."⁷ This prepared Jesus for a ministry that was racially inclusive. " 'This is evident in Jesus' 'congregation' " of disciples. It began with Jesus' choice of twelve disciples that included both a tax collector and a zealot. Tax collectors were despised as collaborators with the Gentile enemy of Israel—the Roman Empire. Zealots were feared because of their militant views that called for the violent revolutionary overthrow of the Roman Empire.⁸

Biblical scholar Gerd Theissen notes,

⁷Curtiss Paul DeYoung, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancy and Karen Chai Kim, *United By Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Race Problem* (London, England: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15.

⁸*Ibid.*, 15.

The fact that both a tax collector and a zealot, a resistance fighter, are included in the most intimate group of disciples . . . points to a readiness for reconciliation which transcends frontiers and culminates in the requirements to love one's enemy.⁹

Theissen further points out that,

Jesus added a number of women just as diverse to his band of disciples including Mary called Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Herod's steward Chunza, Susanna, Salome, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, (*Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40, 41*).¹⁰

Jesus' inclination toward building an inclusive fellowship was not limited to the entourage of disciples who traveled with him. Jesus intentionally reached out broadly to all he encountered, inviting them to participate in the life of his "congregation" of followers.¹¹

Jesus ushered in a new paradigm for those would be followers of his congregation. Some religious leaders of Jesus' day defined their "*congregation*" by who was excluded from memberships. There were long lists of those who could not meet the definition. Such lists included women, Samaritans, Gentiles, individuals with criminal records, anyone who was disabled or sick, tax collectors, and those considered "*sinners*."¹²

There were many who were considered unworthy because of their occupations: "camel drivers, sailors, herdsmen, weavers, tailors, barbers, butchers, physicians, business people, and many others. The only people who qualified were healthy males of pure Hebrew ancestry who held respectable jobs and followed all the laws of the religion. This exclusive

⁹Ibid., 16.

¹⁰Ibid., 16.

¹¹Ibid., 16.

¹²Ibid., 17.

view also required that they avoid contact with those not considered worthy.”¹³

An inclusive Jesus challenged this exclusive approach to religious faith and broke all the rules that religious leaders made to separate themselves from others. Albert Nolan indicated that, “Jesus publicly shared meals with tax collectors and those deemed sinners. For those who saw Jesus as a prophet or the Messiah, his invitation to dinner was equivalent to receiving an invitation to dine at God’s table of inclusion.”¹⁴

Nolan also indicates the significance of such acts when he writes:

It would be impossible to overestimate the impact these meals must have had upon the poor and the sinners. By accepting them as friends and equals Jesus had taken away their shame, humiliation and guilt. By showing them that they mattered to him as people he gave them a sense of dignity and released them from captivity. The physical contact which he must have had with them when reclining at the table and which he obviously never dreamed of disallowing must have made them feel clean and acceptable.¹⁵

The Gospels are filled with stories of Jesus touching those declared untouchable, speaking to those who were not to be spoken to, befriending those who were thought not to deserve a friend. “The Gospel of Mark illustrates this well. Jesus said to a paralyzed man who had been lowered through the roof of a house, ‘I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home’ (2:11). Jesus walked up to Levi while he was sitting at his tax collector’s booth and said, ‘Follow me’ (2:14). Jesus saw Jairus’ daughter lying dead in her bed, he took her hand and said, ‘Little girl, get up!’ (5:41). A woman ‘suffering from hemorrhages for

¹³Ibid., 17.

¹⁴Ibid., 17.

¹⁵Ibid.

twelve years' touched Jesus (5:25). This woman was a person to be avoided and cast aside according to the purity laws of religious leaders. She was a woman. She was sick and getting sicker. She was hemorrhaging—emitting bodily fluids. When she touched the hem of Jesus' garment—therefore rendering Jesus no longer 'pure' according to the rules of religion—Jesus embraced her as a daughter of God."¹⁶

Jesus' ministry was not only to those in his own ethnic group who were considered outcast.

Jesus stepped outside his own ethnic group and ministered in Gentile regions. Jesus reached out to a Gentile man who lived in the cemetery and called himself, "*'Legion'* (5:1-20), Jesus cast the demon out of the daughter of a Greek woman from Syrian Phoenicia (7:24-30). Jesus put his fingers in the ears of a man living in the Gentile city of Decapolis and said '*Ephphatha*' which meant, *be opened*'" (7:34).¹⁷

The culmination of what biblical scholar Brian Blount calls Mark's "virtual Jesus Gentile mission,

Jesus fed four thousand Gentiles (8:1-9). This story, which sounds like a repetition of feeding of five thousand Jews two chapters prior (6:35-44), described a powerful demonstration that he offered to Jews. To make the point even more persuasive to his readers, the author of Mark used 'the table language of the Last Supper' " when he described how Jesus took seven loaves of bread, gave thanks, broke them, and distributed the loaves to the people in an act that not only fed four thousand people but symbolized the inclusion of Gentiles at God's communion table.¹⁸

In addition to Jesus' active table fellowship,

¹⁶Ibid., 17.

¹⁷Ibid., 18.

¹⁸Ibid., 18.

Jesus preached his inclusive gospel in synagogues and in the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus took his agenda for transformation into the very places where the renewal movement of some religious leaders attempted to gain a following for a separatist understanding of Israel's future identity. The author of Luke has Jesus beginning his ministry by preaching in the synagogue in Nazareth (4:16-30). In this setting Jesus announced a ministry that included the poor and oppressed of Israel. Jesus used stories from the Hebrew Scriptures to imply that just as God had sent Israel prophets Elijah and Elisha to minister to widows and lepers outside Israel, his ministry would expand beyond the boundaries of Israel. This "implication" was enough to get him thrown out of the synagogue and nearly killed.¹⁹

Howard Clark Kee states,

Jesus' initiative in reaching out to the outsiders corresponds with the nature and purpose of God, but it is resented and denounced by the traditionalists whose identity is based on the separatist features of Israelite law.²⁰

The author of the Gospel of John also included a time when Jesus countered the influence of separatist religion. A woman from Samaria challenged Jesus to respond to the exclusiveness of the religion practiced by some. She said,

Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem (4:20). Jesus responded, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem . . . But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship Him" (4:21, 23). Jesus shared with this woman from Samaria his

¹⁹Ibid., 19.

²⁰Ibid., 19.

understanding that God's "congregation" included her, a Samaritan.²¹

The dramatic confrontation that Jesus had with the moneychangers in the temple was recorded by all the Gospel writers. The authors of Matthew, Mark and Luke all include Jesus quoting from the prophet Isaiah (56:7) in their retelling. Only Mark included the entire quote, Jesus declared, "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations." (*Mark 11:17 NRSV*). The author of Mark understood that the last four words of that quote from Isaiah—for all the nations—summed up what caused the religious leaders to fear Jesus and look for a way to kill him (11:18).²²

Jesus quoted the prophet Isaiah from the Hebrew Scriptures to announce and declare the purpose and passion of his ministry. Jesus stood in the temple area and proclaimed to all who could hear him what he understood to be the culmination of three years of preaching, teaching, ministering and healing along the highways of greater Palestine, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."²³

Brain Blount captures the writer of Mark's understanding of Jesus' message when he writes:

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is a preacher of multicultural worship. He envisioned a future that was radically different from the one espoused by the Temple leadership of his present Jerusalem. The Temple presided over a world where non-Jewish ethnicity's were condemned by theological motifs of holiness and purity, and demonized by the myopic fever of messianic nationalism. Mark's Jesus offered a counter kingdom proposal: he foresaw a time when

²¹Ibid., 19.

²²Ibid., 19.

²³Ibid., 20.

every person of every nation would call God's temple their house of prayer.²⁴

Jesus' inclusive table of fellowship and vision of a house of prayer that was for all nations was a precursor to what we call multicultural congregations. Jesus' "congregations" of followers were multicultural. Jesus believed that this inclusive vision was rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures and was God's desire for the future. Also given the Gospel writers' evident effort to include the influence of Gentiles on the life and ministry of Jesus the Jew, we believe that the congregation from which they wrote likely were diverse ethnically (and racially).²⁵

The Body of Christ

The Pauline communities were composed of an interesting array of persons, living in a variety of economic and social circumstances, of differing ethnic backgrounds, some slave owners and other slaves, some well educated and others not, some patrons and others clients, some with ecstatic spiritual experiences and others without such experiences.²⁶

The diversity boggles the mind, yet we in America still seek those who look and act like us. Cousar states that,

the ethos within the community, as we have seen, was one of a parity of membership. Since such a nation contrasts sharply with the high structured patterns in the Greco-Roman society in which members had grown up, it is no surprise that conflicts arose in the communities. Some of the conflicts were primarily

²⁴Ibid., 20.

²⁵Ibid., 20.

²⁶Charles B. Cousar, *Interpreting Biblical Text: The Letters of Paul* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1996), 142.

theological in nature, others were social, and many no doubt a mixture of the two.²⁷

Many of the issues that caused division in their communities are still around today. The key concern facing church leaders, both clergy and lay, is how to become an inclusive community.

A familiar phrase that Paul uses for the church is affirming both its unity and diversity is “the body of Christ”, a flexible term, to say the least. The Corinthians had a number of disputes over matters of worship, not the least of which was the relative importance of spiritual gifts. Some members apparently ranked speaking in tongues at the top of the list; others didn’t. Paul contends that there are a variety of gifts, not all given to the same individual, but all the result of the one Spirit.²⁸

Paul reports to the Corinthians the following:

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit, the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another various kinds of tongues, to another, the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. (*I Corinthians 12:4-11 NRSV*)²⁹

²⁷Ibid., 142.

²⁸Ibid., 1.

²⁹I Cor. 12:4-11 NRSV (New Revised Standard Version)

Then, Paul reports to the Roman churches the following:

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. (*Romans 12:3-8 NRSV*)
30

Again in 1Corinthians, Paul concludes the following: Then he turns the image of the human body, indicating how parts of the body are interdependent and cannot get along very well without each other (*Corinthians 12:12-26 NRSV*). The parts with inferiority complexes are encouraged (*12:15-20 NRSV*); those who are conceited are gently rebuked (*12:21-25 NRSV*). On the one hand, for Paul the body symbolizes the unity of the community ("we were all baptized into one body—Jew or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit (*12:13 NRSV*)"). But on the other hand, it illustrates the community's diversity ("the body does not consist of one member but many (*12:14 NRSV*)"). Then if some readers have not yet grasped the point, Paul concludes with a pointed application: "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." (*12:27 NRSV*)³¹

Charles Cousar, writing in *Interpreting Biblical Text*, "The Letters of Paul," observes:

What makes this image for the church so powerful in the letters is not the image itself (which is often used as a metaphor for other groups), but the intimate

³⁰Ibid., Rom. 12:3-8

³¹1 Cor. 12:12-27

relationship between Christ and the church which it implies.³²

How should we begin to look clearly, honestly and openly at the diversity of human family? As believers, disciples, and followers of Jesus, the beginning and ending points of analysis must be from biblical principles.

In 1959, Howard Thurman summarized the challenge of developing multiracial congregations. While directed to the African American Church in his day, in particular, it is an important word for our day; it applies to our own racial and cultural context. He wrote:

The Black church and the White church are under the same ethical imperative. They are both bound by the same commitment, and no extenuating circumstance can at last be used as a permanent alibi for not obeying the imperative. The Black church can no longer sit in judgment on the exclusiveness of the White church and at the same time be content to regard itself as immune to the same searching judgment. The great Black denominators such as the National Baptist Conventions, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Zion Church, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church are under the same command of God to grapple with the issue of inclusiveness as it affects their local congregations and the national conclaves . . . the Blacks have a rich redemptive heritage which must not be lost in this effort to be an integrated religious fellowship. How to conserve the essential idiom that has kept alive in the spirit of Blacks a courage and vitality that has sustained that spirit in all of its vicissitudes, and at the same time to bring into its fellowship more and more of those who are not Blacks, until at last from both sides there is a common meeting place in which there will be no Black church

³²Charles B. Cousar, *Interpreting Biblical Text: The Letters of Paul* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1996), 143.

and White church, but the church of God—that is the task we all must work to finish.³³

We are all saved by faith in Christ. Another principle is that we have been saved by the grace of God as demonstrated in the life and death of God's son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, all of us who believe in Jesus Christ are the same in Christ, no matter our origin, race, nationality or gender. All believers are included in the family of God that transcends barriers of gender, race and nationality.

Paul says that,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "*The one who is righteous will live by faith*"³⁴

The writers of the *Women's Bible Commentary* support this point,

With Romans 1:16-17, the introduction culminates in an initial statement of the letters central point: In the gospel God acts with power to save all human beings, first Jews and then Greeks. If the gospels reveal God's salvation, it also reveals God's wrath.³⁵

Our belief as Christians should be that God is the Creator of all humankind and all are God's children in one family. Racism and exclusion are rejections of the teachings of Jesus Christ and denies the

³³Curtiss Paul DeYoung, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancy and Karen Chai Kim, *United By Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Race Problem* (London, England: Oxford University Press, 2003), 183.

³⁴ Rom. 1:16-17 NRSV (New Revised Standard Version)

³⁵Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ridge, *Women's Bible Commentary Expanded Edition Louisville* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Know Press, 1992), 403.

redemption and reconciliation of Jesus Christ. Racism and exclusion rob all human beings of the wholeness and is used as justification for social, economic and political exploitation; then we must declare before God and before one another that we have sinned against our brothers and sisters of other races in thought, in word and in deed.

The Christian believers can live, and be shaped, by the Word of God. As the Wesleyan tradition emphasizes, "that love is God's most basic attribute. This is a biblical conclusion arising out of, and shaped by, the tradition's reading of Scripture. One of the most important biblical texts in this reading is I John 4:7-12.

This is primarily an argument for Christians to love one another, but the warrant for the exhortation is that God is love:

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone whose love is born of God and knows God, whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us this way; God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we love God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us. God is love and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this; that we may have boldness on the Day of Judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. This is not fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us (*I John 4:7-12, 16b-19 NRSV*).³⁶

³⁶Scott J. Jones, *The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor: A Theology of Witness and Discipleship* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2003), 33, 34.

Again, the *Women's Bible Commentary* supports this view,

"The centrality of family is expressed also in the central ethical demand of the epistle: that we should love one another (3:11)." The community of I John is disrupted by two events: some members deny the full humanity of Jesus (4:3), and some are not loving one another as they should. Belief in the full humanity of Jesus is tied to the community's emphasis on love, because for Jesus and the Community, the sharing of love is the mark of full humanity. Theological doctrine and experience are inseparable. "Those who love God must love their brother and sisters also (4:21 NRSV).³⁷

Theologian Eldin Villafane writes:

It seems to me to challenge the church to a biblical posture of "racial Shalom" (peace with its rich biblical meaning of healing, harmony, reconciliation, welfare, wholeness and justice). It is a prophetic challenge to the church to be the "space" where the presence and contribution of all believers of all colors could be seen as "light" and could be savored as "salt" in a broken world. It is a prophetic challenge to the church to be a sign of the kingdom of God—a place where transformed relations and the presence of justice could be modeled.³⁸

The belief in oneness in the first century church was proclaimed when people joined the church. When individuals were baptized into the church they were informed that in Christ there were no divisions based on race, class, or gender (Galatians 3:28 NRSV).

Every time there was a baptism, the congregation also reaffirmed this baptismal vow. Today, multiracial congregations—and all other congregations should reinforce their belief in unity through preaching, teaching, Christ education, discipleship, catechism, new member classes, and baptismal services. No one

³⁷Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ridge, *Women's Bible Commentary Expanded Edition Louisville* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Know Press, 1992), 466.

³⁸Curtiss Paul DeYoung, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancy and Karen Chai Kim, *United By Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Race Problem* (London, England: Oxford University Press, 2003), 181.

should be able to miss the centrality of oneness in the Christian faith.³⁹

Just as the human body has many different parts that contribute to a whole, so does the body of Christ—the church—has a diversity that determines a whole. According to God's creation, diversity is a necessity; without it there is no wholeness. God's design for the community of faith is full of diversity. Therefore, we can find ways to live, work, play, and worship with each other rather than exploiting our differences.

Historical Foundations for an Inclusive Community of Faith

Methodism had its beginning at Oxford University in England.

John and Charles Wesley, priests of the Church of England, also called the Anglican Church, embarked for Georgia in 1735 as pastors to the colonists and, they hoped missionaries to Native Americans. They came from Oxford University, where they had formed small groups of students who regularly attended communion and gathered for daily prayer, fasting, frequent self-examination, and Bible study. Late, they began to aid poor and imprisoned and to assist in tutoring the children of these persons. The strict rules they laid down to govern themselves led other students to term them *Methodist*.⁴⁰

The inflexibility of the Wesley brothers with their religious practices soon alienated the majority of the colonists. John denounced the religious laxity of the people, insisting on plain dress with no display of jewelry, and attempted to implant his pattern of disciplined Christian living into a people who were struggling to adapt to a new and frightening frontier environment. He refused communion to a person simply because the man had not been baptized by a clergyman ordained by a bishop, and he had little sympathy for most non-Anglicans.⁴¹

³⁹Ibid., 158.

⁴⁰John G. McEllhenny, *United Methodist in America, a Compact History*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1982), 20.

⁴¹Ibid., 21.

It was said that John Wesley would dip babies during the baptismal service, sometimes against the will of the parents, and insisted on rebaptizing dissenters before admitting them to communion. "Both brothers naturally objected to hunting and fishing on Sundays and both stood against slavery and the use of spirituous liquors."⁴²

George Whitfield, an Anglican priest and also a member of the Oxford Methodists, came to the New World for a time as successor to John Wesley.

As John and Charles Wesley had failed in their attempt to minister to the people in the new colony, George Whitfield became one of the outstanding leaders of the Great Awakening – a revival movement that began in the middle colonies, thrived in New England under the preaching of Jonathan Edwards, and then died down only to be revived by Whitfield and others. Whitfield went back and forth between England and America thirteen times preaching wherever he went.⁴³

The early Methodist Episcopal Church illustrates almost without letup the spirit of revival—Second Great Awakening, camp meeting, urban revival—all simulated by the evangelistic fervor of westward expansion. To the circuit riders the whole country was a vast field ripe for the harvest of souls.⁴⁴

The genesis of American Methodism started as a revival and its' history has been marked repeatedly by continuing revivals. Frederick Norwood observes:

⁴²Ibid., 21.

⁴³Ibid., 22.

⁴⁴Frederick A. Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism: A History of the United Methodist and Their Relations* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1974).

From the point of view the denominational story is part of a constant theme in the history of Christianity in all times and places—continuing reformation. Inevitably, it seems the church must go through a process, as story institutions languish and tradition ossify. The history of Methodism consistently demonstrates this theme.⁴⁵

Again, Norwood reminds us that,

. . . the early Methodist possessed and expressed a metamorphosed theology not of her own original creation, John and Charles Wesley provided the basic ingredients and the special emphasis: Catholic tradition, Reformation message, Anglican ecclesiology, Puritan discipline and Priest feeling. From many sources Wesley developed a theology of a royal road of salvation, which is best characterized as a working theology, designed to help persons on their way to heaven. The grace of God was the prime mover, Christ the mediator, and the individual a full participant as responder. The road led through the perfecting of love to entire sanctification. This as “doing” theology with a vengeance! Methodist have been doing their theology ever since.⁴⁶

American Methodism, although it was born of the Evangelical Revival with its European base, became a distinctive entity, related to and indebted to its English progenitor, but independent almost from the start. One need only recall that the movement was planted in North America, not only by Wesley’s emissaries, but also by the freely operating lay preachers who had no license from Wesley. The first founders were Strawbridge and Asbury. Moreover, Asbury, deeply loyal to Wesley, was even more deeply committed to his special calling to spread scriptural holiness throughout his “circuit”—the entire eastern board.⁴⁷

⁴⁵Ibid., 15.

⁴⁶Ibid., 17.

⁴⁷Ibid., 18.

The history of Methodism is not all of one piece, or of one accord.

A sometimes-overlooked diversity persists in spite of apparent connectional unity. Perhaps symbolic is the curious diversity of attitudes towards the use of tobacco and alcohol among Methodists in England, Germany, Australia, as well as northern and southern United States. There is a regional diversity in old Methodist Episcopal tradition. Members in New England, still floating in a sea of Congregational—Unitarian establishmentarian are quite different from Bible Belt members engaged in a still running battle with Southern Baptists. ("Like ghosts they haunt us from places-to-place," complained Asbury.) Both groups are quite different from members in the broad Midwest, abundant as the grains of ripening wheat on the ample prairies, and from those of the Far West, "scarce as hen's teeth" confronting and sometimes communicating with the odd exotic creation of religion characteristic of the *California mentality*.⁴⁸

The most serious neglect of this diversity, however, is the fault of the dominant branch, Episcopal Methodism, currently known as the United Methodist Church. At every turn one is faced with the easy assumption that the history of The United Methodist Church is the same as the history of American Methodism. It is apparent in older textbooks, in the periodicals, in official pronouncements, in Simpson's Cyclopaedia, and in spite of sincere efforts to the contrary, in the new Encyclopedia of World Methodism. It will continue to be apparent in the present history through failure to provide equal time for all.

At least diversity is recognized here, and an attempt is made to deal fairly with the many facets in the United States. The factor becomes especially important in relation to the racial and ethnic varieties, some of

⁴⁸Ibid., 19.

which represent significant strands of the story. If hundreds of thousands of Black Americans are now members of Negro Methodist denominations which have broken off from the mainline parent body, the original responsibility for the break is not theirs. The validity and value of their traditions can be ignored only at the peril of future prospects for Methodism in America.⁴⁹

Again, the diversity has been enriched by the continuation of the tradition of loyal but independent dissent begun by John and Charles Wesley as they sought to bring revival to the church they both loved. American Methodism has spawned a notable series of dissenters of many different kinds, but united in their common devotion to one or another struggle for reform, a struggle which some of them "lost" when they left the church they too loved, to begin what inevitably became another denomination.⁵⁰

The historical record reveals that blacks were among the charter members of the first Methodist Society.⁵¹

McClain informs us that,

... those early Methodist Societies saw black people respond to the powerfully dynamic and evangelistically oriented gospel proclaimed by Methodist preachers, and become a part of the Methodist movement as it took root in America. Some of these black converts themselves became powerful proclaimers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, sons of thunder and wielders of the "sledge hammer, of truth beating on the iron heart of sin," as they sought to extend the Methodist movement and save people from destruction of hell.⁵²

By 1786, ten years after the founding of the American nation, and only fourteen years since the founding of

⁴⁹Ibid., 19.

⁵⁰Ibid., 20.

⁵¹William B. McClain, *Black People in the Methodist Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1994), 16.

⁵²Ibid., 17.

the first Methodist Society, and only four years after the formal founding of the Methodist Episcopal Church; there were 1,890 black members in the new denomination.⁵³

It has been shown that they gave their meager earnings toward the establishment of the church. That church would later and still continues to wrestle, with whether they could be truly Methodist.

McClain asks why did Black Americans respond to the preaching of the Methodist Evangelists. McClain goes on to remind us,

There are numerous accounts of Black American responding to the evangelistic of the Methodist. Letters were sent back to Wesley in England in abundance by the preachers he sent to America. They told of the dramatic conversions of hundreds upon hundreds of blacks who accepted Christianity in emotional and celebrative rejoicing. These were profound and sincere religious experiences, as the black slaves heard of a good and loving God who knew the sufferings of his children, even is sun-baked sons and daughters who found themselves in chains in a strange land.⁵⁴

This dramatic account of Richard Allen, the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church was recorded as his personal conversation of 1777:

. . . I was (he said) awakened and brought to see myself, poor, wretched and undone, and without the mercy of God must be lost. Shortly after, I obtained mercy through the blood of Christ, and was constrained to exhort my old companions to seek the Lord. I went rejoicing for several days and was happy

⁵³W.C. Barclay, *History of Methodist Missions* (New York, New York: New York Board of Missions and Church Extension, Vol 1, 268, 1949), cited by Graham, 11-12.

⁵⁴ William B. McClain, *Black People in the Methodist Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1994), 19.

in the Lord, in conversing with many old, experienced Christians. I was brought under doubts, and was tempted to believe I was deceived, and was constrained to seek the Lord afresh. I went with my head bowed down for many days. My sins were a heavy burden. I was tempted to believe there was no mercy for me. I cried to the Lord both night and day. One night I thought hell would be my portion. I cried unto Him who delighted to hear the prayers of a poor sinner, and all of the sudden my dungeon shook, my chains flew off, and, glory to God, I cried. My soul was filled, I cried, even for me—the Savior died. Now my confidence was strengthened that the Lord, for Christ's sake, had heard my prayer and pardoned all my sins.⁵⁵

McClain says, that as blacks became members of the new Methodist Movement they became faithful in their devotions and sincere in their commitment to worship. Abel Stevens describes how one such incident led to the conversation of the plantation owner:

Henry D. Gaugh, wealthy planter, heard Asbury preach. He was deeply impressed and burdened. He could no longer enjoy his accustomed pleasures. He became deeply serious and, at last melancholy, and was near destroying himself; but God mercifully preserved him. Riding to one of his plantations, he heard the voice of prayer and praise in a cabin, and, listening, discovered that a negro from a neighboring estate was leading the devotions of his own slaves, and offering fervent thanksgivings for the blessings of their depressed lot. His heart was touched, and with emotions he exclaimed, "Alas, O Lord, I have my thousands and tens of thousands, and yet, ungrateful wretch that I am, I never thanked thee, as this poor slave does, who has scarcely clothes to put on or food

⁵⁵Ibid., 9-20.

to satisfy his hunger." The luxurious master was taught a lesson, on the nature of true contentment and happiness, which he could never have found in his sumptuous mansion.⁵⁶

The Discipline of the United Methodist Church attempts to account for the response of black Americans to Methodism. In its discussion of "Black People and Their United Methodist Heritage," it asserts the following: Methodism won favor with black people for two main reasons:

1. Its evangelistic appeal; and
2. The church's attitude toward slavery.⁵⁷

The Wesleyan evangelical message according to McClain was:

... a simple gospel of salvation, designed to awaken a godly experience in its hearers of a conscious fellowship with God. Emphasizing the love of God and the way of redemption, it sought to bring into the lives of poor benighted sinners the message of a Father who cares for his children—all of his children. This conscious acceptance with God issues forth in daily growth in holiness. Christians have as their dominant motives the love of God and their neighbors, and these could free them from sin. Poverty was no barrier to membership the poorest were made welcome. Religion for these early Wesleyans was not a perfunctory, ritualistic faith, but rather an "experience" of faith through which one responded to the love of God. It was a clarion call to righteousness in this world in order to escape eternal damnation in the world to come.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Ibid., 20-21.

⁵⁷*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2000), 15.

⁵⁸William B. McClain, *Black People in the Methodist Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1994), 21.

In my experience the Black church has had an appeal to emotion and style that was different from other groups of people. In addition to style and emotion McClain asserts that: "black Americans responded to Methodism because of the simple message of salvation, and the attitudes of the early Methodist toward slavery." He further states that there are "three other factors that account for the appeal of Methodism to black Americans.

They are:

1. The preaching and worship style of Methodists appealed to blacks,
2. Blacks were allowed to serve as lay preachers; and
3. Methodism was adaptable enough to fit their own unique situation so they could make it their own.⁵⁹

It's my observation in the early days of United Methodism blacks were always separated from each other in meetings, which gave them no opportunity to confer with other blacks. It is apparent that our faith has always been a strong faith. McClain makes a strong point when he says,

... that black Methodists may have been, by and large, uneducated, but were not fools. They knew that a religion which talked about justice and righteousness and oneness in Christ, yet failed to ordain their brothers and husbands, and insulted the black Christians by seating them in separate areas, and oppressed the black sons and daughters of a just God by forcing them to remain slaves had something wrong with it. It had to be reinterpreted and

⁵⁹Ibid., 26.

refashioned to meet their needs. There was nothing wrong with the message: there was something wrong with both messengers and those who sat in the choicest seats.⁶⁰

This has been a pattern throughout Methodism by those who have been proclaimers of the word and those who sit in the pew.

McClain supports this view:

This exclusion continued with the establishment of the Central Jurisdiction, which institutionalized a Black Methodist Church. It made visible to the world that Black Methodist were in fact that: Black Methodist. It provided structure for Black Methodist to elect Black bishops and to superintend black churches and people and attend to the spiritual affairs of black society. It removed the illusion that The Methodist Church was somehow an inclusive fellowship of Jesus Christ that worshipped a God who is "no respecter of persons." While The Methodist Church continued its traditional and historic pattern of condemning specific social coils and moral wrongs, such as drinking liquor and smoking tobacco, going so far as to force its preachers to vow that they not partake, segregation and discrimination were beyond the pale.⁶¹

At this point it was highly important for blacks to preach to their people and to be able to exegete scripture for themselves. The following quote is by a well-respected leader of the Boston School of Theology who offered the theological basis that showed how Christian theology could justify racial segregation he wrote:

The only basis for denouncing all social separation or segregation as Un-Christian is to be found in the theory of racial amalgamation. (Those who favor amalgamation) think that God made a mistake in

⁶⁰Ibid., 37.

⁶¹Ibid., 83.

creating different races or that he had nothing to do with creation . . . The theory is the theory of self-respect, racial self-respect. It holds that God created the different races, that he had a purpose in so doing, and that each has its contribution to make toward the total life of mankind, not through racial elimination, but through racial education and self-development in the divine purpose realized . . . The Christian view of God as Creator leads us to look with reverence and respect upon every race, especially upon the race in whose bosom God has given us life . . . ?⁶²

Again McClain says that,

. . . the Dean of Boston University obviously had not learned that race in itself has no intrinsic value. When race is used to classify people socially, when race is used as a symbol to set people apart for differential treatment, the term, with all its inaccuracies, becomes a weapon.⁶³

It is clear that black people wanted to be a part of the Methodist Church—they had responded to its preaching and worship style. McClain points out “the first meeting of the Central Jurisdiction was in 1940 at St. Louis, Missouri with Bishop Robert E. Jones giving the Episcopal address.” It is said that Bishop Jones pointed out actual advantages Black Methodist had in the Central Jurisdiction, he said in part:

We gain the privilege of electing our bishops who at once become full members of the Council of Bishops with the same status of bishops similarly elected . . . We of the Central Jurisdiction of The Methodist Church have an advantage for the promotion of interracial Church; have an advantage for the promotion of interracial Christian brotherhood which

⁶²Ibid., 84.

⁶³Ibid., 84.

is not held by any other religious groups of people . . . It therefore behooves us at the very beginning of our career as a separate jurisdiction to recognize the gravity of our responsibility as well as the favorableness of our opportunity. It is a responsibility we should by no means shirk; and it is an opportunity of which we should hasten to take every advantage.⁶⁴ Again McClain continues that:

The Central Jurisdiction "hastened to take every advantage" of its separate existence and serve Black Methodist. Efforts were made to enrich worship experiences, upgrade Church parsonages and Church facilities, recruit and train more lay and clergy leaders, increase and enliven the work of women's groups. And there was no help from the national Church to support the efforts of the Black Methodists of Central Jurisdiction. The second attitude prevailing in the Central Jurisdiction was committed to agitate and keep pressure on the general church to eliminate the Central Jurisdiction and make The Methodist Church as inclusive fellowship.⁶⁵

As a pastor I have always been concerned for the church or the body of Christ when it lags behind and allows other groups to move toward inclusion before it does. If the church is faithful to what it reads from Scripture and hears as those who are called by God to proclaim, what is the problem? Should the church be concerned when other groups lead in inclusion?

The founding of the United Nations as an international human rights organization, the establishing of the World Council of Churches and its concern for world ecumenism and world problems, the 1953 Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation, and the civil rights movement removing barriers in the larger society. These events and others on the outside from Black Methodist and a few others at each quadrennial

⁶⁴Ibid., 88.

⁶⁵Ibid., 90.

Conference made it difficult for the Church to fail to act.⁶⁶

There were events outside of the Church that caused the Church to make a step toward inclusion. The process for inclusion in the church is usually slow and lagging behind other groups.

In 1956, the General Conference approved an instrument to facilitate the abolition of the Central Jurisdiction.⁶⁷

The Central Jurisdiction expressed itself through the Committee of Five and a study conference convened March 26-28, 1961 in Cincinnati, Ohio. Its report, *Central Jurisdiction Speaks*, developed the following principles:

1. The fundamental objective in the dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction must be defacto inclusiveness in the Methodist Church.
2. The minimum requirement of defacto inclusiveness is the absence on all levels of church life of patterns and policies based on race or color.
3. Each step taken to dissolve the Central Jurisdiction must be and integral part of an overall plan to abolish all forms of racial segregation and discrimination from the Methodist Church.⁶⁸

The body of Christ continues to lag in its response and responsibility as an inclusive body of Christ. Ten years later after proving an instrument to abolish the Central Jurisdiction of the Methodist Church. "In 1966, The Methodist Church, after much agony, pressure and a combination of many events and

⁶⁶Ibid., 91.

⁶⁷Ibid., 91.

⁶⁸Ibid., 91.

factors (including merger with the Evangelical United Brethren Church) set a date for a termination of the Central Jurisdiction.⁶⁹

The dream of being included in the structure and leadership of the Church was realized for Black Methodist. "They had their fundamental objective and intention in dissolving the Central Jurisdiction de facto inclusiveness." They defined "de facto inclusiveness" as "the absence on all levels of church life of patterns and policies based on color."⁷⁰

With the elimination of the Central Jurisdiction in 1968, the struggle for Black Methodist simply shifted. Technically, they were included in the whole structure of the denomination, and not isolated by law into separate Annual Conference. They were able to secure all the rights, benefits, and privileges afforded to all Methodist who follow its creed and views of membership. A number of blacks received appointments to executive jobs that blacks had never occupied before; a few cross-rare appointments were made for a few "over-qualified" black pastors whom blacks would never have elected in the Central Jurisdiction where they chose their leadership; and a member of blacks were elected to offices and appointed as district superintendents; but de facto inclusiveness has not yet occurred.⁷¹

The United Methodist Church has committed itself to a system of "open itinerancy" of its clergy, and cross-cultural-cross-racial appointments are a significant expression of this commitment. By "open itinerancy" we mean an appointment process that values diversity and actively seeks full inclusion of all clergy persons that embodies this value

⁶⁹Ibid., 91.

⁷⁰Ibid., 93.

⁷¹Ibid., 94.

through its connectional structure. The United Methodist Book of

Discipline states:

Appointments are to be made with consideration of the gifts and evidence of God's grace of those appointed, to the needs, characteristics and opportunities of congregation and institutions, and with faithfulness to the commitment to an open itinerancy [sic]. Open itinerancy mean appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, marital status or age, except for provisions of mandatory retirement. The concept of itinerancy is important . . . through appointment making; the connectional nature of the United Methodist system is made visible.⁷²

Eric Law describes this commitment:

The church's commitment to inclusiveness in its institutional life is a radical stance in a society rent with racial tensions, structural racism and anti-immigrant prejudice. One would expect a church with a strong statement commitment to inclusiveness would have more people called to cross cultural-cross racial appointments. One would expect cross cultural-cross racial appointments in such a highly charged environment would stir intense discussions and dialogue with cultural and ethnic differences, disagreements, and self-reflection. One should also expect these conversations, challenges and struggles to reflect the thinking and experience of the church and the culture at large. It is important for people of faith to recognize and accept that we are called to live out this experience in our personal lives. Our God given call and challenge to build and sustain an inclusive community should prompt us to move beyond ethnocentrism to intercultural sensitivity to biculturalism and, finally to multiculturalism. We are called as people of faith to move beyond seeing our culture as the only valid one to celebrating and incorporating other cultures into our way of life.

⁷²*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2000), 11430.1.

Law continues,

Ethnocentrism is the tower of Babel that each cultural group builds, resulting in the inability to communicate and relate to persons of another culture.⁷³

Lucia Ann McSpadden makes a similar appeal:

The United Methodist Church has put in place a system through its appointment process to help us move beyond ethnocentrism to acceptance and inclusion. We must deal with social inequities, prejudices, and racism by acknowledging their destructive influence in the life of our churches, our committees, and our nature and work to help eliminate them. An authentically multicultural, inclusive church and staff means more than "diversity"; it requires equity and justice. "Therefore if the church is to live out the fullness of the gospel, it must analyze the relations of power that structure its life together." This is important in the case of cross cultural-cross racial clergy appointments where there are significant power differences between ethnic racial clergy appointments, where there are significant power differences the ethnic/racial community represented by the congregation.⁷⁴

The issue of race appears to be a challenge that will not change any time soon. There continues to be a concern with persons whose skin, hair, and eyes are different. When the church reaches the point when it can live out its biblical and theological principles it will understand that "all are precious in God's sight" and will know that "God

⁷³ Eric H. F. Law, *The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed: Developing a Multicultural Community Through Dialogue and Liturgy* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice, 1996), 46.

⁷⁴ Lucia Ann McSpadden, *Meeting God at the Boundaries: Cross Cultural-Cross Racial Clergy Appointments* (Nashville, Tennessee: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2003), 17.

is no respecter of persons.” We will then be able to live as brothers and sisters-the body of Christ.

Theological Foundation

Theological Grounds for an Inclusive Community of Faith

The Black experience and Liberation Theology fit hand in glove. The history of Black Culture easily identifies with the early history in the development of the Jewish nation. The scripture Exodus 6:5-7 is the deep foundation on which my theological statement is based.

I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant. Say therefore to the Israelites, I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. (Exodus 6:5-7 NRSV)

One of the most important steps that a community of faith can take to become an inclusive fellowship is to “invite God into your process.”⁷⁵ The church should “be concerned about what we are doing.”⁷⁶ As Christian communities, our planning process should be different from that of our secular organizations because of our faith. Our planning and our ways must somehow be closely connected with the core

⁷⁵Eric H. F. Law, *Sacred Acts, Holy Change Faithful Diversity and Practical Transformation* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalise Press, 2002), 98.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 98.

of who we are as the people of faith and God. As a committee moves through the process each step should be accompanied by an active discernment of God's will.⁷⁷ When we insist on inviting God to be a part of our struggling with our issues, we maintain a peace of grace in which we can be honest and open to each other and to God.⁷⁸

Law goes on to suggest,

Scriptural passages are like the DNA pattern of human beings. We are discovering a lot about our DNA in medical research, but we still do not fully comprehend how the diverse individuals of the human family are created from the DNA pattern. In the same way, each Bible passage shows a different side of God. Each passage shows a different relationship that God has with different people. No single image or concept in a passage presents the whole picture of God. It is in the discipline of reading and learning from the different parts of the scriptures that we begin to see the bigger idea of who God is. Even then we do not know the full mystery of God.⁷⁹

Perhaps this is what it means for us to say that scriptures contain all things necessary for salvation, but we still do not know the full extent of how the process works—that remains a mystery. When we study the Word of God faithfully, new life emerges. When we are open to the Holy Spirit as we study the Word together, God will be with us, and will connect us to each other and help us to consider who others are and who God is.

⁷⁷Ibid., 98.

⁷⁸Ibid., 98.

⁷⁹Eric H. F. Law, *Inclusion, Making Room for Grace* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2000), 79.

Again, Eric H.F. Law says,

When a community studies scriptures in the grace margin, God becomes a living player in the exploration and dialogue. We do not ask, what do we want? But, what does God want? Including God in the grace margin removes the issues from a purely personal human endeavor and places them in the divine realm. It moves us beyond our need to be powerful or to be right. It turns us to God and invites us to see how God through Christ will mediate, appreciate, and even embrace our differences.⁸⁰

Besides studying scriptures regularly, an inclusive community makes it a discipline to present a variety of concepts and images of Christ and God whenever it is appropriate, especially when the images are connected with the scriptural reading of the seasons of the church.

The following is a list of possible opportunities to do this:

1. Preachers and Sunday school teachers of the community can take advantage of the wealth of God images in our scripture and present them to the community through their ministries of preaching and teaching.
2. Intercessors can utilize a wealth of images of God in formulating their public prayers. The diversity of God images will invite the diverse community members to better connect with corporate prayer life.
3. Music teachers can intentionally select music with lyrics that enable the community to connect with a diversity of God images and concepts.
4. Our church buildings and our homes can have visual art that presents a diversity of images of Christ and God.
5. Leaders can help ministry groups in the community discover and articulate their driving images of God. The community should also provide a time and space for them to share their

⁸⁰Ibid., 79-80.

“theologies” with one another in a respectful, mutually supportive environment.

6. A community can regularly reaffirm its baptismal covenant to remind everyone of the dynamic relationship they have with God through Christ.⁸¹

It is my belief that in order for the community to truly enter into being an inclusive faith community, the members of the community must be in dialogue with each other so they can get to know and understand each other. A community of faith must liberate itself from the bondage of exclusive patterns and embrace the abundant grace of God.

Theological reflection—that is,

the understanding of faith—arises spontaneously and inevitably in the believer, in all those who have accepted the gift of the Word of God. Theology is intrinsic to a life of faith seeking to be authentic and complete and is, therefore, essential to the common consideration of this faith in ecclesial community.⁸²

Present in all believers—and more so in every Christian community is the need for theology.

There is present an effort to understand the faith, something like a pre-understanding of that faith which is manifested in life, action, and concrete attitude. It is on this foundation and only because of it, that the edifice of theology—in the precise and technical sense of the term can be erected.⁸³

⁸¹Ibid., 80.

⁸²Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation History, Politics and Salvation* (Maryknoll, New York: ORBIS Books, 1973), 3.

⁸³Ibid., 3.

Theology As Wisdom

In the early centuries of the church, what is now termed theology was closely linked to spiritual life. It was essentially meditation on the Bible, geared toward spiritual growth.

Distinctions were made between the “beginners”, the faithful, and the “advanced”, who sought perfection. This theology was above all monastic and therefore characterized by a spiritual life removed from worldly concerns it offered a model for every Christian desirous of advancing along the narrow path of sanctity and seeking a life of spiritual perfection. It is important to remember, however, that at this same time the reflections of the Greek Fathers on the theology of the world—cosmos and history—go well beyond a mere personal spiritual meditation and place theology in a wider and more fruitful context.⁸⁴

Theology As Rational Knowledge

From the twelfth century on, theology begins to establish itself as a science:

The transition has been made from *sacra pagina* to *theologia* in the modern sense, which Abelard . . . was the first to use.⁸⁵

The function of theology as rational knowledge is also permanent—insofar as it is a meeting between faith and reason, not exclusively between faith and any one philosophy in general. Reason has, especially today many other manifestations than philosophical ones. The understanding of the faith is also following along new paths in our day: the social sciences, for example, are extremely important for theological

⁸⁴Ibid., 4.

⁸⁵Ibid., 5.

reflection in Latin America. Theological thought not characterized by such rationality and disinterestedness would not be truly faithful to an understanding of faith.⁸⁶

Theology As Critical Reflection on Praxis

Gustavo Gutierrez, in his book, *A Theology of Liberation History*, makes the following observation:

The function of theology as critical reflection on praxis has gradually become more clearly defined in recent years, but it has its roots in the first centuries of the Church's life. The Augustinian theology of history, which we find in the City of God, for example, is based on a true analysis of the sign of the times and the demands with which they challenge the Christian community.⁸⁷

Historical Praxis

Again, Gutierrez identifies for us an understanding of historical praxis. He writes,

For various reasons the existential and active aspects of the Christian life have recently been stressed in a different way than in the immediate past.⁸⁸

In the first place,

... charity has been fruitfully rediscovered as the center of Christian life. This has led to a more Biblical view of the faith as an act of trust, a going out of one's

⁸⁶Ibid., 5.

⁸⁷Ibid., 6.

⁸⁸Ibid., 6.

self, a commitment to God and neighbor, a relationship with others.⁸⁹

It is in this sense that St. Paul tells us that,

. . . faith works through charity; love is the nourishment and the fullness of faith, the gift of one's self to God, and invariably to others. This is the foundation of the praxis of the Christian, of his active presence in history. According to the Bible, faith is the total response of humanity to God, who saves through love.⁹⁰

In this light, "the understanding of the faith appears as the understanding not of the simple affirmation—almost memorization—of truths, but of a commitment, an overall attitude, a particular posture toward life."⁹¹

Critical Reflection

All the factors that have been considered have been responsible for a more accurate understanding that communion with the Lord means a Christian life centered around concrete and creative commitment of service to others.

They have likewise led to the rediscovery or explicit formulation of the function of theology as critical reflection.⁹²

Theology must be man's critical reflection on himself [*sic*], on his [*sic*] own basic principles. Only with this approach will theology be a serious discourse, aware of itself, in full possession of its conceptual elements. We refer to a clear and critical attitude regarding economic

⁸⁹Ibid., 6.

⁹⁰Ibid., 7.

⁹¹Ibid., 7.

⁹²Ibid., 11.

and socio-cultural issues in the life and reflection of the Christian community. To disregard these is to deceive both oneself and others. But above all, we intend this term to express the theory of a definite practice. Theological reflection would then necessarily be a criticism of society and the Church insofar as they are called and addressed by the Word of God; it would be a critical theory, worked out in the light of the Word accepted in faith and inspired by a practical purpose—and therefore indissolubly linked to historical praxis.⁹³

In the preaching of the Gospel message, the administration of the sacraments and the charity of its members, the church proclaims and shelters the gifts of the Kingdom of God in the heart of human history.

The Christian community professes a “faith which works through charity.” It is as it ought to be—real charity, action, and commitment to the service of humanity. Theology is reflection, a critical attitude. The pastoral activity of the church does not flow as a conclusion from theological premises. Theology does not produce pastoral activity, rather it reflects upon it. Theology must be able to find in pastoral activity the presence of the Spirit inspiring the action of the Christian community.⁹⁴

The theology of liberation offers us not so much a new theme for reflection but a new way to practice theology. Theology as critical reflection on historical praxis is a liberating theology. A theology of the liberating transformation of the history of humankind and also therefore that part of humankind—gathered into ecclesia—which openly confesses Christ.

⁹³Ibid., 11.

⁹⁴Ibid., 11-12.

This is a theology which does not stop reflecting on the world, but rather tries to be a part of the process through which the world is transformed. It is a theology which is open—in the protest against trampled human dignity, in the struggle against the plunder of the vast majority of people, in liberating love, and in the building of a new, just, and fraternal society—to the gift of the Kingdom of God.⁹⁵

It is this kind of illumination of the Word that brings about an inclusive community of faith.

The Social Context of Theology

It would be very different to talk about theology without mentioning the social context of theology. Cone says,

The dialectic of theology and its sources pushes us to examine more closely the social context of theological language. Because Christian theology is human speech about God, it is always related to historical situations, and thus all of its assertions are culturally limited.⁹⁶

God, the subject of theology, is eternal; history and time like those who articulate it, limit theology itself.

Though we direct our thought to eternal and transcendent beings, it is not eternal and transcendent; though we regard the universal, the image of the universal in our minds is not a universal image. It is a finite image, limited by the temporality and particularity of our existence. Theology is not universal language, it is interested language and thus

⁹⁵Ibid., 15.

⁹⁶James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1975), co545.

as always a reflection of goals and aspirations of a particular people in a definite social setting.⁹⁷

One could not talk about theological reflection without speaking of the struggle of African Americans for justice in America. The truth of our particular struggle pushes us beyond ourselves to the truth of other struggles. The Bible records the struggles of the oppressed people throughout history. This only helps to broaden our vision of truth and thereby impel us to make real the beloved community that Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke of so eloquently. We as a people are made for each other and no one can realize their full humanity except as they participate in its realization for others.

There is a need for us to focus on Jesus Christ as the starting point for Christian thinking about God. Jesus defines Christian identity in faith and practice. My theological reflections start with Jesus, because I am Christian. As James Cone says,

Like most theologians, I believe that Christian theology is language about God. But it's more than that, and it is the "more" that makes theology Christian. Christian theology is language about the liberating character of God's presence in Jesus Christ as he calls his people into being for freedom in the world. The task of the theologian, as a member of the people of God, is to clarify what the church believes and does in relation to its participation in God's liberating work in the world. In doing this work, the theologian acts in the roles of exegete, prophet, teacher, preacher, and philosopher.⁹⁸

⁹⁷Ibid., 36.

⁹⁸Ibid., 8.

In my practice of ministry over the last thirty-five years, I find one of the major responsibilities of the theologian/preacher is the proclamation of the Good News. Cone asserts that,

. . . theologians are exegetes and prophets. As prophets they must make clear that the gospel of God stands in judgment upon the existing order of injustice. This task involves, as Adam Heschel said, the 'exegesis of existence from a divine perspective' disclosing that God is not indifferent to suffering and not patient with cruelty and falsehood. But God's power and judgment will create justice and order out of chaos.⁹⁹

As teachers, theologians are instructors of faith, clarifying its meaning and significance for human life. They investigate the past and relate the struggles of the apostles and our ancestors to our present struggles. Thus they become defenders of faith, showing its reasonableness and its fittingness for the oppressed community now.

As preachers, theologians are proclaimers of the Word, the truth of Jesus Christ as the Liberator of the poor and the wretched of the land. Here theologians recognize the passionate character of theological language. It is a language of celebration and joy that the freedom promised is already present in the community's struggle for liberation.

As philosophers, theologians are keen observers of the alternative interpretations of the meaning of life. They know that the gospel cannot be taken for granted, and cannot be accepted, without the continued test of life in struggle. The philosophic side of the theological task keeps one intellectually honest and open to other perspectives. It guards against dogmatism and provides the groundwork for dialogue with other faiths.

⁹⁹Ibid., 8.

In all roles theologians are committed to that form of existence arising from Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. They know that the death of a man on the tree had radical implications for those who are enslaved, lynched, and ghettoized in the name of God and country. In order to do theology from that standpoint, they must ask the right questions and then go to the right sources for the answers. The right questions are always related to the basic question: What has the gospel to do with the oppressed of the land and their struggle for liberation? Any theologian who fails to place that question at the center of her or his work has ignored the essence of the gospel.¹⁰⁰

Identifying the right source is more complicated. Of course, the sources include Scripture and tradition as they bear witness to the high source of revelation as particularized and universalized in Jesus Christ. But also with equal and sometimes greater weight, the sources must include the history and culture of oppressed peoples. In the United States and its cultural dependencies that must mean people of color—black, yellow, red, and brown. Here the theologians ask: How have black people understood their history and culture, and how is that understanding related to their faith in Jesus Christ? The places to go for the answers are the black sermon, prayer, song, and story. These sources must not be evaluated with the same methods used in analyzing the classical tradition. The methods one employs for analysis must arise from the sources themselves. Only then can one do justice to the complexity of black thought forms and the depth of theological expression found in black life.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 8.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 9.

Black Theology and Ideology

Christian theology is conditioned and limited by social context through our existence in a particular political setting and because God is revealed in history, we are obligated to ask:

How do we distinguish our words about God from God's Word, our wishes from God's will, our dreams and aspirations from the work of the spirit? This is the crucial problem for Christian theology. Unless this question is answered satisfactorily, black theologians' distinction between White Theology and Black Theology is vulnerable to the white contention that the latter is merely the ideological justification of radical black politics. While some black theologians may be content with the identification of Black Theology with current politics, I maintain that the authenticity of black theological discourse is dependent upon its pointing to the divine One whose presence is not restricted to any historical manifestations. Indeed, unless Black Theology seeks to bear witness to the divine Word who transcends the subjective musing of black theologians, then there is no difference between Black Theology and White Theology when viewed from the perspective of Feuerbach's critique that religion is nothing but human talk, nothing but human projections and illusions.¹⁰²

The Christian theologian, in my understanding, must have a hermeneutical consciousness for the proclamation and interpretation of the gospel as defined by the struggle for freedom by those who are oppressed by society.

In this situation, the theologian must accept the burden and the risk laid upon her or him by both social existence and divine revelation, realizing that they must be approached dialectically, and thus their

¹⁰²Ibid., 77.

exact relationship cannot be solved once and for all time.¹⁰³

Cone states that,

. . . when theologians speak about God, they must be careful that their language takes account of the ambiguity and frailty of human speech through humility and openness. They can never assume that they have spoken the last word. But the recognition of the limitation should not lead to the conclusion that there is no word to be said. Indeed the clue to our word and God's Word is found in human history when divine revelation and social existence are joined together as one reality. From God's initiative alone the divine enters our social existence and discloses what is "wholly other" and what is "like" God. If we take seriously the clue disclosed in God's Incarnation, namely, the cross and resurrection of Jesus, then we know that we have a way of cutting through the maze of political and social confusions. Because the divine has entered the human situation in Jesus and has issued God's judgment against poverty, sickness, and oppression, persons who fight against these inhumanities become instruments of God's Word.¹⁰⁴

The Real Question of Concern

As a person of color who has been excluded and oppressed in society, the real question of concern for me is how has God entered in the social context of human existence and appropriated liberation? God as liberator is of major concern for people who have been oppressed.

¹⁰³Ibid., 89.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 89-90.

Cone says,

God enters into the social context of human existence and appropriates the ideas and actions of the oppressed as God's own. When this event of liberation occurs in thought and praxis, the words and actions of the oppressed become the Word and Action of God. They no longer belong to the oppressed.¹⁰⁵

It is my belief the task of Liberation Theology is to show the significance of the oppressed struggle against inhuman powers, relating the struggle of the people to God's intention to set them free. My biblical reading informs me that God is always good, and full of mercy and compassion for those who are poor and needy. Cone reminds us that:

Theologians must make the gospel clear in a particular social context so that God's people will know that their struggle for freedom is God's struggle too. The victory over evil is certain because God has taken up the cause of the oppressed, promising today what was promised to the people of Israel while they were yet slaves in Egypt.¹⁰⁶

Cone further states that,

The theological assertion that the struggle of the oppressed is God's struggle is not religious projection and neither is it a statement, which moves from the human situation to divine revelation. Whatever may be said about the biblical faith and black faith derived from Scripture, neither was based on a feeling of inwardness separated from historical experience. Both Israel and later the black community took history seriously and continued to test the validity of their faith in the context of historical struggle. The faith of Israel and the black people was a historical faith, that is, a trust in the faithfulness and loyalty of God in the midst of historical troubles. It was not from

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 90.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 91.

introspection, nor from mystical meditation, but from the faithful reading of history that Israel and later the black community came to believe that the God of the Exodus and of Jesus were struggling to liberate broken humanity to wholeness.¹⁰⁷

Because of the oppression, persons of color have lived through in this society; it is the grace of a loving God who has helped us through our situation. It is the Word of God that has informed and empowered us to the liberation that we have obtained in recent years. All of the body of Christ must be open to being enlightened and informed by the Word of God. As Christians, believers, and followers of Jesus, the beginning and ending points of what should be done must be from biblical principles. There is no clearer vision of racial inclusion and equality than that which is given in the Bible. For Paul, the connection between the members of the body has been arranged by God. The parts are all connected to form one body, even though, one might think that some members are so different that they cannot be part of the body. But Paul dismisses this idea quickly:

If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body" that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body" that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as is, there are many members, yet one body.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1975), 91.

¹⁰⁸1 Cor. 12:15-20 NRSV (New Revised Standard Version)

As different parts acknowledge that they are connected to one another, they recognize the relational nature of the body. The parts are connected in a special arrangement to affirm the equality of all the members of the body, no part is ostracized; all are recognized and celebrated.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable and those members of the body that we think less honorable, we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving greater honor to the inferior members, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.¹⁰⁹

It becomes impossible to separate and isolate one part from another, as different parts of the body relate to one another through their various functions. This shows that parts of the body are mutually dependent; they need one another to survive. The members depend on one another for nutrition, support, and life. By being dependent in this way they feel happiness, sorrow, and pain as one body. Martin Luther King, Jr. summed up this dependent nature of the body poignantly when he said, "whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly".¹¹⁰

Paul agrees, If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored; all rejoice with it. Paul was so convinced of this

¹⁰⁹Ibid, I Cor. 12:21-25 NRSV (New Revised Standard Version)

¹¹⁰Martin Luther King, Jr., *Center for Social Change: Non-Violence Selected Speeches and Writings of MLK, Jr.* (Atlanta, Georgia: The Center, 1974), 23.

equality that he said, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all are one in Christ Jesus."¹¹¹ Equality in the biblical sense means that there are no class distinctions, there are no racial barriers, and there are no gender separations.

Jesus' death and resurrection unite all persons. Jesus brought diverse persons into at oneness. How should we begin to look clearly, honestly, and openly at the diversity of the human family? As followers of Jesus, there is no clearer vision of racial inclusion than those of biblical and theological principles.

Theological Dilemma: Racism As Sin

As a pastor and as a person of color, one of the most demoralizing problems that I have had to deal with is racism. Dr. William McClain allows us to critically consider the concerns and issues of being a multicultural church with special reference to African Americans.

He says that:

For too long in the Christian Church racism has not been perceived for what it is—a basic theological problem. The problem of race at its deepest level, is not a factual problem, nor a moral problem, but a theological problem.¹¹²

McClain continues,

¹¹¹I Cor. 12:26 NRSV (New Revised Standard Version)

¹¹²William B. McClain, *Black People and the Methodist Church, Whither Thou Goest* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1994), 102.

Racism is a theological problem because it is sin. It is not merely a moral error, an error in judgment, or a social aberration. It is sin because it divides the human family and blurs the image of God in persons. We are created in God's image. We possess what the theologians call the *imago dei*—the image of God. This means that God has bestowed upon each person his mark, made them in his image and called all persons to the same destiny. It cannot be decided by looking at people; we must look at God. God alone is the source of human dignity. God has created all in the image of himself and herein lies their dignity. It is not an achievement or a merit or even an intrinsic quality. It is a gift, a bestowal."¹¹³

He further states that,

The Christian faith affirms that there is an essential unity of humankind. It is therein we find contained our essential likeness to God and our likeness to each other. To divide what God has made as a unity and to blur that image by judging persons by the color of their skin is to commit sin against God. Racism does that. It calls into question God's creative action. For what it implies is that God has made a creative error in bringing into being races other than white.¹¹⁴

In conclusion, "racism is sin because the racists rely on race as a source of their personal value. Their lives have meaning and worth because they are part of the racial context." To quote an old Prophet Habakkuk; "Dread and fearsome are they; their justice and dignity proceed from themselves." (*Habakkuk 1:7*)

When a person relies on himself for his ultimate worth *he thinks of himself more highly than he ought to think*. This leads to a worship of self

¹¹³Ibid., 102.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 103.

rather than God. The Creator is replaced by the creature. That is the original sin of pride. This is self-love as opposed to mutual love.

Our message must be as Harry Hoosier as one of the founders of our church said, "I sing by faith, pray by faith, and do everything by faith; without faith in Jesus Christ I can do nothing." This I believe is where we should begin and end.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY-DETERMINING WHO WE SHOULD BE AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

Trinity United Methodist Church is a nine hundred member Euro-American Church in Salina, Kansas. Salina is a rural industrial regional center for north central and northwest Kansas with a population of 50,000 people. People come to Salina for medical services, sporting events, shopping and cultural arts. It has a United Methodist University and a major business college (Brown Mackie College). The cultural arts and humanities are very important to the city of Salina. A division of city government is supported by local taxes is specifically for the arts and humanities.

Trinity United Methodist is an exciting, growing and open church that is serious about growth from persons of every socio-economic, and ethnic background. It was by design and intention that the researcher was appointed senior pastor. The church wanted an African-American pastor who had experience in a cross-racial setting and staff experience in an urban church, who would be open to all races and cultures.

The aim is to be open and inviting to people of every race.

On August 17, 2004, the initial meeting was held with the context associates. The group was racially, economically, and educationally mixed. The names of the participants were Lorine Burch, Beverly Cole, Barry Collins, Debora Cox, Judy Kohardt-Hazelton, Dirk Hutchinson, Leo Lake, Eva Lankhorst, Han Lankhorst, Kathy Olson and Vicky Price. The group of persons operated on the belief that God called the church to be "one" people.

The desire of the researcher and the congregation is for many different people to come from all places of life with many different needs, and perspectives. The expectation of this project is to seek ways in which authentic relationships can be shaped by embracing diversity and spiritual growth in Christ likeness. It is our hope that this method can serve as a model for equipping congregations with effective patterns of communication and interactions that will affect the dynamics of Christian spiritual worship.

It is the intention of the researcher to look at ways to stimulate dialogue, bible study, biblical foundation sermons and Sunday school materials. It is our hope that the local church can rediscover its unique responsibility and mission of Jesus Christ. The mission of Christ is to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19, 20 NRSV). It is hoped further, that these ideas will provide resources for congregations that seeking to become multi-racial.

The meetings with context associates and professional associates

were set on the following dates: September 2, 2004; September 14, 2004; September 18, 2004; October 12, 2004; October 26, 2004; November 4, 2004 and November 17, 2004. All participants were given a copy of the Project Proposal so that the researchers expectations would be known. Each knew that the basic objective was to create; A Model for Racial and Cultural Diversity in Congregational Life: Encountering God Through Worship in the Same Place and at the Same Time.

The Involvement of the Professional Associates

The Professional Associates were furnished copies of each foundational paper, autobiography and the Project Proposal. The Professional Associates met with the context associates after the first two weeks. Dr. William E. Salmon helped us with the survey of the congregation on diversity.

Planning the Methodology

As we studied the Vision and Mission statements of Trinity United Methodist Church (UMC), we wanted to know how the church would respond to the following activities listed in the project. The abstract was placed in the church newsletter so the membership would know what was happening.

The context associates and the professional associates decided that activities included in the project proposal should be the activities we should use in developing the Model of Ministry. These activities included:

1. Bible Study and discussion.
2. Selected sermons and discussion.
3. Discussion of the researcher's foundational papers on diversity.

The researcher had read several of Eric H.F. Law books on multiculturalism. Some of the context associates were impressed with his work. We decided to use a theory from one of his books that we believed created healthy dialogue among us.

4. To do a congregational survey.

From Law's book,

The Bush was Blazing But Not Consumed, Developing a Multicultural Community through Dialogue and Liturgy. A theory from Melton J. Bennets book on, Towards Ethnorelativism: A Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity in cross-cultural Orientation.¹

Bennet's theory consisted of five intercultural sensitivity development processes:

1. Willingness to live in the uncertainty of being nonjudgmental. Finding a way to prevent us from judging others, by creating an environment that encourages the inward reflection through which we can ensure that our value remains a process relative to our cultural context. We must first look inward and find out what values and beliefs within us are being threatened. Law used the example of the woman caught in adultery as

¹ Eric H.F. Law, *The Bush was Blazing But Not Consumed* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalise Press, 1996), 61.

a way for us to look inward at ourselves for the mistakes we have made.²

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him [Jesus], "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. (John 8:3-9, NRSV).

2. Learning to be 'interpathic' to others who are different. Interpathic is defined, as temporarily stepping out one's frame and entering the frame of reference of the other person to help on to understand the feeling of the other person. When one is able to listen to another person's interest it helps that person to learn and understand a different cultural experience.³

²Ibid., 62.

³Ibid., 66.

3. Commitment to cultural pluralism. It is fostering the commitment to accept and work through the existence of more than one cultural framework within the community. It is affirming that these differences must be understood totally within the context of the relevant culture. This can be done only after repeatedly providing actual experiences of interpathy in which one cultural group can truly experience, see, and feel the other's perspective. A community with this commitment will not act, or decide until the issue at hand is truly understood within the context of each cultural framework.⁴
4. Learning to do contextual evaluation. Contextual evaluation is the ability to analyze and evaluate situations relative to different contexts. The end result of contextual evaluation is a judgment based on the relative goodness of the different cultural values involved but conditioned by the situations in which the judgment has to be made. Contextual evaluation has to be part of the skills that a multicultural community must develop. As Christians, we have another context to consider in our contexts. We have to take God's context into account. After exploring the different cultural perspectives, we have to ask, 'What would God say to this situation? How does the gospel inform us in our decision making process?'⁵
5. Living the spirituality of creative marginality. If we practice interpathy, culturalism, and contextual evaluation regularly for a long period of time, we may feel marginalized if we do not have the support of a multicultural community. When differences are constantly integrated into one's world vies, we feel that we can no longer identify ourselves as members of any specific culture. We face the danger of not belonging to any specific culture group. These persons have unique gifts and can be used constructively to mediate between cultural groups. Those persons who grew up in a multicultural household or spent a major part of

⁴Ibid., 68.

⁵Ibid., 71.

their lives immersed in another culture need to be appreciated and seek out persons who have become marginalized because of their ability to live between cultures. If they are given the appropriate support and training, they can become a major force in enabling the church to move to being a multicultural, ethno relative church.⁶

The researcher, context associates, and professional associate discussed these Principles of Melton theory and decided to have each associate reflect one of each principle as a question, and discuss each question. The following are the five reflective questions/statements proposed for reflective dialogue.

1. How are you willing to live in the uncertainty if being non-judgmental?
2. Identify instances in which you are learning to be "interpathic" in relationships with those who are different from you.
3. Describe ways in which you are committed to cultural pluralism.
4. How can we, as individuals and the community of faith, actively enter into the experience of other individuals so that each person is able to claim and maintain his/her own identity?
5. As Individuals, how is it possible to create a community of faith that is open to living as "in between people" with each other?

⁶Ibid., 72.

These questions/statements caused the group to look inward and desired to involve the church by doing a survey on diversity in the Sunday school classes of youth and adults. A group of workshops was developed to design the Congregational Survey, (workshops Appendix A and congregational surveys concerning diversity Appendix B). This survey was shared with the adult and youth Sunday school classes. It was also decided that the church's vision statement should be the focal point of the survey for the youth and adult classes, (Appendix C).

In our initial meeting it was agreed that the researcher would preach two sermons from the Biblical foundation scripture. It was agreed that the sermons should be on "The Body of Christ" and a sermon on "The Love of God and Others." These sermons were preached on October 17, 2004 and October 24, 2004 respectively. After the sermons were preached the context associates and the Sunday school classes were asked to give constructive reactions to the sermons.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDING OUT WHO WE ARE AS THE BODY OF CHRIST: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MODEL

The sermons, worship bulletins, and congregational surveys were scheduled to be preached, and with the congregation's participation, were completed in the month of October 2004. The context associates shared stories of events that took place before the researcher arrived. These events show the openness and intentionality of this congregation.

The first story encompasses, two different Inclusiveness Fairs, which were held at Trinity United Methodist Church for the purpose of getting to know more about as many types and categories of people as possible. People of different races, cultures, art, music, literature, dancing, clothing, etc. were displayed and shared to give the participating public insights that would promote understanding. The people who attended had a great time, learned a lot and were able to put specific faces and experiences with the information they had gained, hopefully leading to more acceptance and tolerance for those who were different than they were. A couple of bonuses that happened had to do with people connecting with others like themselves, relieving their feelings of isolation. A lady from our congregation who was part Native

American met and became friends with another Native American lady who had a booth. They continued that friendship after the fair was over. A Jewish lady who had been part of the committee that organized the fair found out that there were several other Jewish families in town, helping her to feel less isolated from others of her faith. She went on to help our congregation put on a more authentic seder meal during Lent.

A second story in Trinity's history of inclusiveness took place when our former youth director, Brian, arranged for four members of the visiting Joseph Holmes Chicago Dance Company, a multicultural dance company, to perform for and interact with a combined youth and adult Sunday school class at the church. The foursome included two black dancers, one white dancer and one Puerto Rican dancer. When these dancers entered the church, the first thing they saw was a picture hanging in the entry way showing the faces of five children of different ethnic backgrounds. They said they immediately felt welcomed and included in our fellowship and would want to attend our church if they lived here.

In another experience, approximately eight years ago, Trinity became involved in a cross-racial Disciple Bible study with a predominately African-American United Methodist Church in town. This idea came out of conversations at work between co-workers about the differences and similarities of the two churches and the need for our community to "mix" and have more contact with diverse people. The

Disciple Bible Study (cross-racial) experience has gained popularity because there was an opportunity to hear other people's stories and experiences and different ways of looking at the same thing. There were heated and interesting discussions as well as lots of laughter and revelations about how different or similar particular groups of people are. The dialogue that happened at the study sessions, allowed us an opportunity to share and question each other in a very open, non-threatening way. It also gave us a chance to see the way the Holy Spirit works in bible study to develop community and build community among those who wouldn't seem to have a lot in common. At the yearly conclusion of each Disciple Bible Study, there were statements like this, " 'in the past, I never had a chance to get to know many black people', or 'wow, I didn't think white folks did that too', or 'it's been so good to get to know' 'this' or 'that' about you—I never would have guessed you think like that!" Many stories were told about our families and our ancestors, funny, sad, stories that make us think. We become family to each other and continued to be in contact, remembering special days and celebrations. We are more sensitive to how things may seem to people who are a little different from us from having had the opportunity to be in the Disciple Bible study group together. We're a little more open to accepting others differences because we've made friends with folks who are different from us, and it's ok, it was a good experience.

In more recent history, an opportunity to embrace inclusiveness came up during the church's process of having photos taken for a pictorial directory. A lesbian couple with a young daughter had been struggling with how to do their family photo without causing a fuss for the congregation. They had decided to take separate adult photos with the child in each photo. Both the photographer and the sales person were rude and uncooperative to the women and their daughter when they went through the process of getting their pictures taken. The researcher intervened and told the company that these ladies were part of the church family and if they couldn't be treated like everyone else, the entire order would be cancelled. They were given an apology and treated with respect.

The first sermon was preached on October 17, 2004, from I Corinthians 12:12-30, titled: "The Body of Christ, Community Faith." The second sermon was preached on October 24, 2004 from I John 4:7-12, titled: "To Know God is to Love Others." These scripture texts were both parts of the Biblical Foundation paper. The context associates wanted to see what impact preaching and participating in worship service would have on the congregation. It was strongly felt that this congregation is open to gospel preaching, and interaction in worship.

Sermon Number One

Title: "The Body of Christ, Community of Faith"

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²²On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, ²⁵that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. ²⁷Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. ²⁸And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. ²⁹Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

As the Body of Christ or community of faith, who are we? What is our purpose in life? The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church defines the local church as "a community of true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redemptive fellowship in which persons divinely called preach the Word of God and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers and the redemption of the world."

Is this different from the Bible? As the Body of Christ we are called in our diversity or differences to be one body. Our text declares that God arranged it so that all members would not have the same gifts, but that within the unity there would be diversity. God arranged members in the

body, each one of them as God chose (12:18). Diversity does not just happen; it is a part of God's gift to the church. We are tempted to think of differences as barriers to unity, as obstacles to overcome. But by making diversity a gift of God, the text reorders the issue of power in the church. Differences are neither ignored nor viewed as limitations, "for in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and we were all made to drink of one Spirit (12-13)."

At a church staff retreat, the leader drew an outline of the human body and posted it on the wall. She explained that each staff member was to take a marker and put her or his name on the part of the body that represented how he or she perceived himself or herself. Each person went to the drawing and wrote her or his name on a particular part of the body. Some were hands, others were feet, one was a heart, another the head, another the mouth and one a ear. Then they talked about their choices. It certainly dramatized for them what Paul meant when he wrote to the Corinthians about being a part of the Body of Christ. At the concluding session of that staff retreat, the leader had the participants write letters of recommendation about themselves. They were to list what they appreciated about themselves, both as individuals and as members of the staff. It proved to be a unique time of self-affirmation.

Increasingly, congregations are becoming incorporated, formed into legal corporations. What is needed more is for churches to become incorporated in terms of being united, blended, and combined thoroughly to form a consistent whole. When a group, a family, or a community of individuals acts as a single person, it is whole.

Paul made many references to the Body of Christ in his epistles. That image implies unity, but also diversity. God always created diversity. We go against God's design by trying to make everything the same. Like "birds of a feather," we tend to associate with those who are similar to us. But the church encourages – sometimes-even forces – us to be in fellowship with all sorts of people. We have often used the phrase, "Well, it takes all kinds." It does! There is not a more profound description of the church than this. It does take all kinds of people. A homogeneous world would be boring. That's why Paul lists eight body parts: foot, hand, ear, eye, nose, head, and what he calls our unrepresentable parts. All are necessary. All are part of the whole. We don't all have curly hair. God didn't make everyday Monday or every rose pink, or every animal and elephant. God loves our differences!

There seems to be little cooperation among churches, and not too much more cooperation within them. The continuing task of the church is to bring us together, to enable us to get along, work together, and fit our differences into some sort of unity. In the church, we intentionally provide a place for human interaction and connectedness. Rather than the image of the "melting pot," the better image is that of a "stir-fry." The

church is called to bring individuals together in ways that allow flavoring to take place while the elements retain their unique identities.

Paul had to instruct the Corinthians in how to maintain unity within the church. Nearly everything had become a source of division – even their awareness of God’s gifts. Paul had to tell them that even though these spiritual gifts are different; the same Spirit inspired them all. One was not more important than the others. What they had in common was their source. What they were to do was enhance the body.

We tend to discount our own gifts and the part that we play in the body. We tend to envy the gifts and roles of others. We may end up resenting what another can do. When we say, “I wish I could do that,” are we denying whatever it is we might have for the good of the body? We expend far too much energy watching others. The time comes when we have to say, as Noah did in the play, *Green Pastures*, “I ain’t much, but I’ve all I got!” As an old poem has the squirrel say to the mountain, “If I cannot carry the forests on my back, neither can you crack, a nut.” Thomas Merton said, “For each one of us, there is only one thing necessary: to fulfill our own destiny, according to God’s will, to be what God wants us to be.” God would never ask why we aren’t like someone else. God’s only question to us would be why we aren’t more fully who we are.

The result of comparison is competition. The result of competition is envy. Envy is the one deadly sin that is not about satisfaction, but dissatisfaction. Paul warned that when persons “measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they do not show good sense” (2Cor. 10:12)

Henry Van Dyke once said, “Use what talents you possess: the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sing best.” General Dwight D. Eisenhower would not tolerate having one of his generals refer to a foot soldier as “just a private.” He firmly believed that the war would be won by other soldiers, not the generals. Likewise, congregations grow and thrive by the efforts of each member.

In one church, a picture of Christ as the good shepherd was being painted on the wall behind the altar. Only the outline of the head and his shoulders were visible. A stranger stepped into the church and noticed the sketch outline. He asked one of the painters when the picture would be finished. The workman replied that it was finished. The visitor pressed him, saying that most of it was missing: the eyes, mouth, arms, hands, legs, and feet. In fact, he said the whole body of the Lord is missing. The workman replied, “You won’t see it on a wall. The body of Christ is this congregation.

Just as the Word became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, we are to embody the work of God as the Body of Christ. The spirit of Jesus Christ lives on today in the gathered community of his disciples. St. Teresa once said that, “Christ has no body now on earth but ours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours: yours are the eyes through which to

look with Christ's compassion on the world. Yours are the feet with which to go about doing good, and yours are the hands with which he is to bless others now." Following the resurrection, the disciples found the body of Jesus missing from the tomb. We pray the body of Christ won't be missing today. Friends, there is to be no hierarchy of gifts within the church. All are equal in the sight of God. We are the 'body of Christ, we are the community of faith." We are one in Christ Jesus, we are one in faith. We are God's people and heirs with Christ Jesus.
AMEN, AMEN, and AMEN.

Worship Bulletin for October 17, 2004

Call To Worship October, 17, 2004

The Chimes

The Introit (11:00)
Men's Choir

"No Need To Knock"

The Prelude

"Be Thou My Vision"

The Greetings & Passing of Peace

The Announcements

The Call to Worship (congregation responds in bold print)

The Creator of the universe bids us come to worship; let us come in awe, reverence, and eager anticipation.

We gather in unity with other Christians, for in Christ we are one body.

We are together to learn, to care for one another, and to gain strength for our common ministry.

We need one another to discern God's will, and we depend on one another to carry it out.

The Spirit of God is upon us, teaching and empowering. The joy of God is our strength, today and always.

We open ourselves to the word of life as we lift up hands and hearts to the source of help.

The Anthem (8:30)
 Bell Choir (11:00)
 Chancel & Rejoice Choirs

"Sweet, Sweet Spirit"
 "Let There Be Peace On Earth"

****The Affirmation of Faith** (congregation responds in bold print)

Do you believe in God?

I believe in God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.
 Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only son, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day, he rose again, he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

****The Gloria Patri # 70**

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
 Amen, Amen

The Special Music (8:30)
 Men's Choir (11:00)
 Bell Choir

"No Need To Knock"
 "Sweet, Sweet Spirit"

The Prayer Concerns
 Meditation
 Pastoral Prayer
 Lord's Prayer # 895

The Offering
 Offertory
****Doxology # 95**

"Rondeau"

****The Offertory Prayer** (congregation responds in bold print)

Let us Pray

For the abundance with which you have enriched our lives we give thanks, gracious God. For your truth, more precious than gold, and for our individual gifts, granted for the common good, we are most grateful. Receive now the offerings we return to you, that they may declare good news and fulfill your purposes. Amen.

The Children's Time (8:30)
(11:00)

****The Hymn of Preparation** "Many Gifts, One Spirit" 114

The Scripture
I Corinthians 12:12-30

The Sermon
"The Body of Christ, Community of Faith"
Pastor Andrew Gardner

****The Closing Hymn** "In Christ There Is No East or West" 548

****The Sending Forth** (congregation responds in bold print)

We are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

We drink of one Spirit and are united in a common ministry.

Care for one another, that there may be no discord in the body.

If one member suffers, all suffer together; If one member is honored, all rejoice together.

God anoints us to preach good news to the poor and proclaim release to the captives.

God sends us out to help the blind see and to free the oppressed from their bondage. Amen. Amen.

Comments and reactions were made following sermon number one, (see Appendix D).

On October 24, 2004, the following sermon was preached.

Sermon Number Two
Title: "To Know God Is to Love Others"
Sermon Text: I John 4:7-12

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

"Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God for God is love."

John has a winning way of urging responsibility, addressing his disciples as objects of Jesus' affection. The absolute type of love we must have is the same type of love that God has for us through Jesus Christ. To know God is to love others pure and simple, there is no way around it. Listen, for "God is love" and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Mutual love is the responsibility of the Disciples of Christ. The sure sign of God's love is swelling among us is out of love for one another. This love should transcend all gender, racial, age, and geographical concerns that we may have. God's love does not depend on our love but divine love among the Disciples of Christ matures when they have love for each other. God's love among us was manifested in Jesus whose description as the One and Only begotten of God. Jesus is God's one-of-a-kind Son, through whom life is made possible for the children of God.

The writer of I John turns our eyes upon the many dimensions of love. The constant emphasis on God's initiative on love signals a critical, theocentric difference between agape, romantic love, friendship, political concourse and altruism. There is no appropriate way to speak of cohesive love encompassing God and Christians, Christians and Christians than in phrases and sentences.

In describing the divine God, the writer of I John said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should love one another." Are there any better means for maintaining the church's tradition and recalling Jesus' sacrificial love than to replicate the style of Jesus?

We tend to need help in remembering and knowing what Jesus said and did for us. The language of the text should be etched in the memory of every disciple/learner/follower of our Lord. Like a wedding

vow, it does not just convey information about the Savior's love, it does something to us, and it tells us what we should do as Jesus' followers.

John 15:10, 12 says to us. "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." When we love in this manner we make a clear statement to our communities that we know God and to know God is to love others. The people of God, the family of God, or the Disciples of Christ should make a clear and strong statement to our church and our community that we take seriously our stewardship and our commitment as a disciple of Jesus Christ. This is the command that is given to us by the One that has given us an opportunity to be a participant in life.

To our modern ears, commanding love may sound ridiculous. Romantic notions tell us we cannot command love. We assume love is a feeling. Feelings come over us, and we get swept away. We assume we cannot command feelings any more than we can command the wind and the weather. We view ourselves as subjects to the whims of love-like rain and snow are subject to the weather conditions. These feelings cause us to make a love connection.

Do feelings command our love? The gospels maintain Jesus is the one who commands the winds and the waves. The Savior now commands us to love one another, because love is from God and to know God is to love others. Jesus had liberated us from our enslaving definition of God. If we are subjects of the weather, then we are slaves to the feeling of love. Jesus is the Lord of love, and if we are in Jesus, then love is to be subject to us. We command it. Jesus declares love is the standard of Christ's church. If we are to be faithful to Jesus, then we need to make the choice to love one another because to know God in Jesus Christ is to love others.

We, as Disciples of Christ, often show ignorance and unwillingness to view love in this way. Church fights so often prove we are not accepting our Savior's view of the love commandment. We cannot pick and choose whom we love and remain a Christian. We are to love everyone.

Jesus will not have us as slaves to our emotions. This is not to say we ignore or deny our emotions. Jesus did not deny his feeling in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus wanted a different way, yet Jesus would not allow his emotions to contradict God's will. We are not to allow our feelings to dictate our actions.

Friends are we following the commandment of love? Are we reaching out to persons with whom we are in conflict, seeking reconciliation in Jesus' name? In light of our passage, we cannot use the age-old excuse, "I don't like those people or that person." Jesus said, "I command you to love one another." It comes to this simple question: Is Jesus our Savior or do we worship our hurt feelings?

Some years ago a church had a relatively strong youth program. The senior high group was hopelessly split into several cliques. The friction within the group came to such a point that someone needed to call for help. A very well respected member of this church said he would meet with them. He came to a meeting where thirty-five youth sat around looking bored and agitated with each other. This member, who knew many of the youth, listened as they shared their feelings about each other in the group. It did not seem as though they were getting anywhere. Then this member gave a mini-sermon: "I think you have got to put all your negative feelings aside now and do what Jesus told us to do: 'Love on another.'"

There were many snickers to that comment. Many thought it wouldn't work. "They do not want a sermon!" Then the wise member replied, "I'm sorry, did you say we had to like each other? All we have to do is love one another. To like someone is based on feelings. To love someone like Jesus commanded means we respect and honor that person as a fellow child of God. All I'm saying is this, "Give each other some slack and try to respect one another."

Then he said, "Now, I hope you will stop worrying about all this and get busy doing what you are called to do by "Jesus' command. Stop worrying about your hurt feelings and come together to do something good for someone else. You may be surprised how much this will help you as a group."

This was the turning point for this youth group. The youth decided they should do some service projects and they promised to be civil to each other. They started a newspaper-recycling program. They helped the church sponsor a picnic for the neighborhood. They got involved in CROP Walk for hunger. Get the picture? They stopped worrying so much about their differences and hurt feelings and focused on service and ministry. Then one day as they were working at the recycling site, the church member who had spoken to them came by. He talked for a moment but watched the senior highs working together and having fun with each other. He made this observation: "Look at those Christians loving one another." Those words spoken to them as a sermon had caused them to know God and to love others.

Worship Bulletin from October 24, 2004

Call to Worship October 24, 2004

The Chimes

The Introit (11:00)

The Prelude

The Greetings & Passing of Peace

The Announcements

****The Call to Worship** (congregation responds in bold print)

Jesus Christ, the Great Physician invites us into the healing presence of God, our refuge.

God knew us before we were born, and summoned us to service in our youth.

God, our Rock and Fortress, rescues us from injustice, cruelty, and wickedness.

God touches our lips and puts words in our mouths. God commands us to speak and removes our fears.

God, our hope and trust, meets us where we are and leads us to times of witness and praise.

God's revelation comes in unexpected places to meet our needs and empower our service.

****The Hymn of Praise**

"The Gift of Love" 408

The Anthem (8:30)

"Praising The Lord, Sharing His Love"

Trinity Folk (11:00)

"Fairest Lord Jesus" Chancel Choir

****The Affirmation of Faith** (congregation responds in bold print)

Do you believe in God?

I believe in God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only son, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, was born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day, he rose again, he ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God, and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

****The Gloria Patri # 70**

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen

The Prayer Concerns

Meditation

Pastoral Prayer

Lord's Prayer # 895

The Offering

****The Offertory Prayer**

The Children's Time

****The Hymn of Preparation**

"When Love Is Found" 643

The Scripture

I John 4:7-12

The Sermon

"To Know God Is To Love Others"

Pastor Andrew Gardner

The Baptism (11:00)

****The Closing Hymn**

"Help Us Accept Each Other" 560

****The Sending Forth**

Comments and reactions were made following sermon number two,

(see Appendix D).

The Congregational Survey Openness to Diversity was then completed, with regard to our mission statement at Trinity United Methodist Church and our openness to diversity, (see Appendix E). Testaments on how diversity works concerning where our new and diverse members begin the process, church growth as we fulfill our purpose and the characteristic statement responses are found in three charts, (see Appendix H).

The researcher continues to be impacted by Eric H.F. Law's statement when he said, " When people gather, the dialogue process satisfies the fire by providing a nonjudgmental environment in which they can discuss a common subject with the understanding that there will be different points of view and cultural perspectives. The primary purpose of dialogue is for each person to learn from each other so he or she can change and grow. In the dialogue process, we provide activities to help participants' practice being nonjudgmental and to listen interpathically to each other. The dialogue process maintains the hope by holding up the value of cultural pluralism, developing the participant's skill in contextual evaluation, and moving them into constructive action to do justice. The dialogue process further affirms the spirituality of marginality as we wander in between cultures. The dialogue is the hope

that draws us together to form a multicultural community where we can deal with intercultural issues without consuming each other.”¹

We have begun to see the results of some of the activities that were done during the project. In open dialogue this researcher’s context associates shared the concerns that interested them the most. The results of the reflective questions/statement dialogue are noted, (see Appendix F). A congregational survey reflection workshop was also completed involving this researcher’s context associates to give constructive feedback as to an overall response of the congregation’s responses, (see Appendix G).

¹Eric H.F. Law, *The Bush was Blazing But Not Consumed* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalise Press, 1996).

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The theme of the focus group in which this project was created is named Urban Development and Intercultural Communication. The intent of the focus group is to empower individuals with all of diversity in the community to come together, dialogue and recognize that they have capabilities and the abilities to transform the community. Trinity United Methodist Church has looked inward and embraces diversity in the heart of God as something special.

⁹After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰They cried out in a loud voice saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb." (Revelations 7:9-10 NRSV)

The researcher believes that God calls us to be one people. Personal experience may play a key part in forming convictions and commitments regarding issues of culture and ethnicity. Far more significant, however, is the reading and understanding of Scripture. The overwhelming weight of biblical data persuades us that the church must acknowledge and confront the racial and cultural divide. Seminaries

must train future church leaders to be culturally sensitive, and that individual believers and congregations must intentionally seek to stretch themselves through significant and ongoing relationships at home and abroad. Scripture, theology, and a better understanding of history should drive our thinking on these and other such issues; our experiences, and those of others, provide corroborating testimony.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible testifies that God's heart is inclined toward people from every nation, tribe and tongue on earth.¹

The Beginning of Culture

Gary Parrett and Steve Kang make a revealing point that,

God created humankind in his image, the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. *Genesis 1:27 NRSV* Christian theology consistently affirms that all humans, male and female, were created to bear God's image on earth. Just as this applies to both genders, it applies also to people of all nations, tribes, and tongues. All people bear the image of God. God's intentions for these, his image bearers, include the command to cultivate the creation. In Genesis 1 and 2, God gives humans what has been called a 'cultural mandate.' Indeed, the word culture derives from the Latin *colere*, which means 'to cultivate.' Therefore, although culture is a human enterprise, it began as an act of obedience to the

¹Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, S. Steve Kang and Gary A. Parrett, *A Many Colored Kingdom. Multicultural Dynamics for Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academics, 2004), 51.

command of God. At the beginning of the human story, then, male and female humans made in God's likeness are busy with various tasks of cultural development. At this point, there is but one "race of humans, and there are no nations or ethnic groups."²

Genesis 10 records the so-called table of the nation. It tells us about the scattering of the sons of Noah – Shem, Ham, and Japeth.

Many Old Testament scholars believe the chapters were arranged logically so that the descriptions of the people's movements follows the record of their emergency from the ark. Chapter 11 actually occurred first, chronologically speaking, and it is this event that explains how and why the dispersion of Noah's progeny occurred. This separation and dispersion of families to different areas of the earth likely resulted in the emergence of distinct people groups and what would later be called different races.³

Although "race" has been used to divide people into categories, often for exploitive and sinful purposes, the biblical emphasis is that all humans share a common origin.

Parrett and Kang disclose that in Genesis 12, with the call of Abram,

... a descendent of Eber (whose name, it is widely believed the term Hebrew is derived). God makes a covenant with Abram, and this covenant includes the formation of one great nation-Israel-and the blessing of many nations. Indeed, Abram's name, which means "exalted father" is changed to Abraham, meaning "father of multitudes," I will those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.⁴

²Ibid., 52.

³Ibid., 54.

⁴Ibid., 55.

The researcher has pointed out that specifically as a community of faith we should strive to become one body. It would take many books to explain God's vision of us. God's heart for all people remains on display throughout the remainder of the Hebrew scripture.

In the atoning work of Jesus we are reminded that,

In the fullness of time, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, as the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the world. Jesus' coming is the climactic moment in the biblical drama of God's reconciling all things to himself. From Genesis 3 onward, God has been about the task of bringing all creation back into alignment with his purposes. To this end, God chose Israel that she might be a light to the nations. To this same end, God sent forth prophets to speak his word. To this end, finally, God became incarnate in Christ. God's global vision is clearly seen in the incarnation. It is for love of the entire world that God sends his Son, "For God, so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but may have eternal life". (*John 3:16 NRSV*)

[Jesus] is "a light for the revelation to the gentiles" as well as "glory to [God's] people Israel." (*Luke 2:32 NRSV*). Even in recording the royal lineage, Matthew reminds us that Gentiles (two, at least; Rahab and Ruth) have a place in the genealogy of Israel's Messiah. Christ comes to seek and save the lost *Luke 19:10*. Through Christ's life, death and resurrection, "God was reconciling the world to himself."⁵ (*2 Cor. 5:19 NRSV*).

It is the view of this researcher that the work of reconciliation must continue among us as the body of Christ. We must allow the cross to accomplish the reconciliation, between God and between us as the community of faith. As we are reconciled to God, God also destroys the

⁵Ibid., 56.

dividing wall of hostility and indifference that had separated Jew and Gentile and red, yellow black and white.

We are reminded that, . . . the ministry of reconciliation is carried on through the church. We are Christ's body on earth today, sent to preach the good news, to do the works that God has prepared for us (*Eph. 2:10 NRSV*), and to make disciple of all nations (*Matt. 28:19 NRSV*). When Christ commissions the Apostles to make disciple of all nations, he affirms what was already evident in the Old Testament. As we have seen, God's heart has ever been toward all families of the earth. Therefore Jesus tells the Apostles that they will be witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.⁶

This verse is soon symbolically realized when the Spirit of God is poured out upon the believers in Acts 2 and the gospel is proclaimed in the languages of many nations. We have a constant reminder of the inclusive "all" that is mentioned throughout Scripture that should help us understand the importance of inclusion. It is the hope of this researcher that those who are the body of Christ will always use the tools of the Kingdom. It is important that we understand that we as Christians, conservative or liberal, black or white, male or female share qualities that differentiate us from others in the larger culture as Christians. All of us believe in the existence of God. The urban community is part and parcel of all these groups of people. A major

⁶Ibid., 57.

concern for the church community should be to model more effective forms of communication between cultural and racial groups. As Christians our understanding should be that God made all creation. As a diverse people of God we each bring different gifts and evidences of God's grace to the unity of the church and to society. We are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus ministry to all people.

To be an inclusive people means to be open, accepting and supportive of all persons enabling them to participate fully in the life of the church, the community, and the world. Another mark of being inclusive is the promotion of activities in facilities accessible to persons with disabilities.

As a United Methodist, the researcher has drawn on four sources for understanding God: the Bible, Christian tradition, experience, and reason. Christians may ask:

- What do we learn from tradition?
- What do we learn from our experiences?
- What do we learn from reason?

Christian communities in different times and places vary in the emphasis they give to each source.

Scripture

Scripture is the primary source, revealing the Word of God, as it is necessary for the salvation of humankind. Through scripture Christ meets us in the experience of redeeming grace.

We are convinced that Jesus Christ is the living Word of God in our midst whom we trust in life and death.⁷

As we open our minds and hearts to the word of God through the experience of human beings inspired by the Holy Spirit, faith is born and nourished, our understanding is deepened, and the possibilities for transforming the world becomes apparent to us.

The Bible is a sacred canon for Christian people. It is to be read with understanding and lived out in our experiences of life.

Tradition

Tradition is understood both in terms of process and form, has played an important role. The passing on and receiving of the gospel among persons, regions, and generations constitutes a dynamic element of Christian history. The story of the church reflects the continuing activity of God's spirit transforming human life. Tradition is the history of that continuing environment of grace in and by which all Christians live, God's self-giving love in Jesus Christ. Tradition acts as a measure of

⁷*The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: Publishing House), 78.

validity and propriety for a community's faith insofar as it represents a consensus of faith.

We are challenged by traditions around the world that accent dimensions of Christian understanding that grow out the sufferings and victories of the downtrodden. These traditions help us rediscover the biblical witness to God's special commitment to the poor, the disabled, the imprisoned, the oppressed, the outcast. In these persons we encounter the living presence of Christ. These traditions underscore the equality of all persons in Jesus Christ. They display the capacity of the gospel to free us to embrace the diversity of human cultures and appreciate them values. They reinforce our traditional understanding of the inseparability of personal salvation and social justice. They deepen our commitment to global peace.⁸

Experience

Our experience interacts with Scriptures. We read Scripture in light of the conditions and events that help shape who we are, and we interpret our experience in terms of Scripture.

All religious experience affects all human experience; all human experience affects our understanding of religious experience. Experience authenticates in our own lines the truths revealed in Scripture and illumined in tradition, enabling us to claim the Christian witness as our own.⁹

Christian experience gives us new life, and new eyes to see the living truth in Scripture. It confirms the biblical message for our present.

⁸Ibid., 80.

⁹Ibid., 81.

It illumines our understanding of God and creation and motivates us to make sensitive moral judgments.

Reason

Although we recognize that God's revelation and our experiences of God's grace continually surpass the scope of human language and reason, we believe that any disciplined theological work call for the careful use of reason.

- By reason we ask questions of faith and seek to understand God's action and will.
- By reason determine whether our Christian witness is clear.
- By reason we ask questions of faith and seek to understand God's action and will.
- By reason we organize the understandings that compose our witness.
- By witness we test the consequence of our witness to the biblical testimony and to the traditions that mediate that testimony to us.
- By reason we relate our witness to the full range of human knowledge, experience, and service.¹⁰

Since all truth is from God, efforts to discern the connections between revelation and reason, faith and science, grace and nature are useful endeavors in developing credible and communicable doctrine. Our quest as Christians should be to understand the Christian faith and to live out the gospel in a way that will commend itself to person who are seeking to know and follow God's ways.

¹⁰Ibid., 82.

These four sources each with distinctive contributions, working together can aid and help our quest for vital and appropriate Christian witness.

In our project we experienced dialogue, Bible study, reflective discussion, and the importance of the proclamation of the gospel. Each of these were embraced by the context associates and the congregation. There is an openness to the inclusion of all of God's children. It will be interesting to see what takes place over the next year.

Joseph R. Jeter Jr. and Ronald J. Allen in their book; *One Gospel, Many Ears Preaching for Different Listeners in the Congregation* remind us that, "the preacher helps the congregation toward multicultural worship."¹¹

They remind us that,

...multicultural preaching can be quite challenging, it can also be energizing as preachers help communities. To be sure, preaching in multicultural communities (and preaching to help communities become multicultural) can involve significant risk. Nevertheless, such preaching can help congregations embody the multicultural reality of the reign of God.

Multicultural preachers will seek to do the following.

- facilitate the central conversations of church around issues of multicultural, by naming these issues in sermons
- help the congregation find its new identity while honoring and affirming the inevitable "faith of loss" that will occur in transition as a

¹¹Joseph R. Jeter Jr., and Ronald J. Allen, *One Gospel, Many Ears Preaching for Different Listeners in the Congregation* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2002), 24.

congregation ceases thinking of itself as one culture and recognize its multiculturality

- listen to people to whom they preach to honor their fears and to help them envision the gospel qualities of a multicultural church and world
- be sensitive to “saying words wrong” and preaching “sermons that hurt”
- move beyond the “one size fits all” sermon toward perichoretic models that will engage texts and themes from more than one perspective
- keep the mission of the church toward into the multicultural world for which Christ died.¹²

This researcher believes that the church of Jesus Christ is called to live out the covenant with God and with one another as the eschatological community, realizing or modeling in the present life the communal life of the eternal kingdom of God. It is to cultivate the life of the kingdom that has been inaugurated by the incarnation, death, and resurrection of our Savior, Jesus Christ. For this reason the church must strive to proclaim in word and deed the fabric of the eternal kingdom—love, justice, compassion, righteousness, and peace.

The church has already received, through the gift of faith, the oneness of the church. It is God who has declared us one in Jesus Christ. The church is not called to work toward creating a multicultural community merely for the sake of being in step with the world. Instead, the church is to declare to the world, through an authentic and

¹²Ibid., 128.

persistent witness that the immanently Triune God has graciously and decisively acted in history through divine economy.

The body of Christ is made of all who are made vulnerable to God's history of forgiveness. They are those who have been a new history, a new story, rather than the world's story. That is why we quite literally receive at baptism a new self and name. Baptism is but a reminder that we need the entire church to help us understand the ongoing task of unlearning the old self and learning to live our new life appropriately. We need innovative congregations that are willing to take the lead in modeling what it means to welcome persons from outside their racial constituency into their communal life. Congregations need to redesign their mission statement, worship styles, and social practices in ways that reflect the New Testament call to be multiracial. Congregations must prepare to embrace the broad multicultural, international, and multilingual context of the United States in the twenty-first century. Congregations that build multiracial communities are those who strive on all levels to affirm the dignity of every person and to sustain relationships based in mutuality and respect for each other. All congregations experience transitions and as they do they should seek to build (especially those that are in the urban area) from within that community.

Congregations that have been intentional about their interaction within its racial groups will be healthier than those where there are

unresolved conflicts. Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook said that: "In congregations that are always in process, health denotes a community where people interact with each other in respectful and appropriate ways, where feelings and ideas are expressed directly and openly, where gifts of all are welcome and utilized appropriately, where clergy and laity use power justly and constructively for the common good and recognize the abuse of power, where there is an openness to ongoing education and issues in the community, and where the spiritual concerns and pastoral care of members are addressed."¹³

This researcher believes that it is crucial for persons engaged in cross racial work to continue to delve into their own personal history for sources of prejudice, racist attitudes and beliefs, it is critical for congregations to go through a process for investigation, interpretation, and ultimately renewal. Such a process would allow the congregation to take a look at its history and unmask some of its skeletons and secrets. All congregations, just as all human institutions, share a history of heroism and courage alongside a history of failure and fear.

Again we are reminded by Chery Kujawa-Holbrook that: "Leadship is a key variable for congregations concerned with building multiracial community over the long haul. Clearly, clergy and laity who understand the dynamics of power and oppression and who are committed to change are integral. Such leaders tend to view building multiracial community

¹³ Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook, *A House of Prayer for all Peoples Congregational Building Multiracial Community* (Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 2002), 180.

more in terms of process than as product or program. Many clergy and laity interviewed experience a strong sense of vocation or call to antiracism, racial justice, or to multicultural community itself. At the most basic level, they experience building multiracial community as a call from God. They tend to share a sense of long term and 'sacrificial commitment'. They strive to 'walk the talk knowing the risks'. Leaders in multicultural communities come from different backgrounds, yet many share common experience in that they express some turning point or 'conversion' in their lives resulting from a direct and personal encounter across the boundaries of race, ethnicity, and culture."¹⁴

This researcher believes that when we are grounded and nourished in God's spirit and word we are better equipped to be the "body of Christ." We can also challenge our own prejudice and racism and resistance to change and thus are better equipped to lead a congregation to being multiracial.

This project tried to live out these programs that Kujawa-Holbrook mentioned as being effective elements for multiracial community:

- Christian programs, biblical and theological doctrine that names racism as a sin.
- A dual focus on teaching and experiential activities.
- Clearly stated definitions of racism as prejudice plus power, bias, discrimination, and other forms of exclusion; and discussion of culture and ethnicity.

¹⁴Ibid., 181.

- Activities that focus on institutional and systemic racism as well as individual racism.
- Explicit connections between racism and other forms of exclusion and oppression.
- Strategies and plans for a long term implementation of a comprehensive antiracism program in organizations and communities of various sizes and complexities in a variety of contexts and settings and practical tools and resources for implementing this process.
- After examining racism within the church, a focus that extends beyond the organizational church to civil society.
- An approach that fosters ocumenical and interfaith connectedness.¹⁵

As the body of Christ and the community of faith, God calls all humans to a life of rich diversity. Our spirituality reflects the relationships we have with God, other people and the world and is consistent with our racial, ethnic and cultural heritages. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus is frequently found in relationship with and in communication with persons of cultures different from his own. The process of living in a multiracial community impacts our hearts, our minds and our lives and brings about new attitudes and behavior about God, oneself, and our larger society. Choosing to live in a multiracial community is counter-cultural, given the monocultural bias of the American culture. To live in such a way requires much prayer and reflection rooted in a multiracial community of faith in God but also in

¹⁵Ibid., 184.

other people. As a people of God we are called to respond to a society that is straining under the weight of injustice and broken relationships. Our call, our belief, and our interdependence are intended to be a source and a gift from God. As persons of faith, we affirm that the reign of God was not built on separatism or political arguments, but on the transformation of hearts and new life. Those virtues of God modeled through Jesus Christ, of justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation help us to resist stopping at the political, social and emotional level of racial awareness. Through building and nurturing a multiracial community we can be about healing the wholeness of the body of Christ. We are the body of Christ on earth today, sent forth to preach good news, to do the works God has prepared for us (*Eph. 2:10 NRSV*), and to make disciples of all nations (*Matt. 28:19 NRSV*).

We are called to convey the gospel of Jesus Christ in any setting, but because Jesus is Savior of all people, we are called to do this in a multicultural setting. Our call is to reach all kinds of people: the lost, the unchurched, and the dechurched. Our churches need to meet the new tidal wave of new people of color becoming residents in the United States. Our churches should meet the needs of a changing demographic. The question we must ask is, "Are our churches prepared to serve the needs of these people?" The inscription on the Statue of Liberty in the New York Harbor epitomizes what should be on the marquee in front of our churches, "Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me/I lift my

lamp beside the golden door?" If the Christian church is to continue being a strong religious force in the world, our congregations will have to reach out to people who are different from them. They must move beyond their resistance of doing evangelism in cross-cultural settings.

APPENDIX A

WORKSHOPS – BUILDING AND DEVELOPING CONGREGATIONAL SURVEYS

Trinity UMC

October 12, 2004

WORKSHOP – Test #2: Building a congregational Survey by the Contextual Associates

William Salmon

Professional Associate

Style	To Be Remembered	To Be Experienced	Product Survey	
Collegial Time 120 min.	The methods used to build a corporate survey.	How we worked together to use group intuitions.	Souvenir Tablemat	
PRELUDE	ORCHESTRATION			POSTLUDE
	I	II	III	
S.T.E.P.S. Set up Time Experience Product Style UN style set up Copy of 5 questions as posters Room 22 OPENING Prayer by Andrew Sing # 519 on tablemat ☐Let Every Voice☐ Vs. 1 Deep Drill Reflect Word/Phrases Emotions What song about? Context: Qualitative Quantitative Purpose: To develop Congregational Survey	Contextual Conversation Ask for board secretary. Question: When you think of <u>diversity</u> what do you think of? (Reflections on board.) Question: What does our congregation do to shed light on our desire for diversity? (Reflections on board.)	Workshop # 1 Individual intuition Individual work Split sheet in two columns. Ask for 3 - 5 summary responses on individual cards. (Approx: 12 to 15) 1. What is preventing our congregation from practicing diversity? 2. How does our service of worship support our desire for diversity? Place on circle chart in random order.	Workshop # 2 Group intuition Group into similar 3 to 5 responses. Re-chart into similar columns. RE-NAME GROUPS! <u>Break Time</u> Sing: vs 2 Lift Every Voice ASSIGN EACH INDIVIDUAL TO WRITE 2 - 4 QUESTIONS FOR EACH CATEGORY. Place under appropriate column.	Deep Drill Chart 1. Word/phrases 2. Clearest? 3. Most interesting 4. Anticipate how congregation may respond. NOTE: Questions will be re-organized for congregational survey. Adult and Youth Sunday School Classes to be surveyed. Need volunteers. Youth: Vicki Black Comm. Debbie Target date: November 7 Sing: vs. 3 "Lift Every Voice"
5 posters	Board sheet, marker and tape	Split sheets, pencils, cards, markers, board sheet	3x5 cards, category chart forms, tape	Song Sheet format
6 min	4 min	5 min 35 min	10 min break, 15 min. individual work, and 15 min. group work	15 min. Reflection 5 min. Context and send out

CONTEXTUAL CONVERSATION Workshop Developing Congregational Survey – October 12, 2004	
WHEN YOU THINK OF DIVERSITY, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF?	WHAT DOES OUR CONGREGATION DO TO SHED LIGHT ON OUR DESIRE FOR DIVERSITY?
Being different	Express a desire to be diverse
Variety	Inclusiveness Committee/Fair
Colors	Inclusive Vision Statement
Different thoughts	World Religions Studies
What “I am not”	Attendance growth as a result of 2 new
“Rubbing shoulders/elbows with others”	pastors
Economic differences	Inclusive staff
Generational differences	Trinity Tom Tom (email communications)
Educational differences	Great Variety of Sunday School offerings
Experience that we bring – what “got us here”	
“Melting Pot” or “Tossed Salad”	
“Shish Kabob”	

CONTEXTUAL CONVERSATION Workshop Developing Congregational Survey – October 12, 2004	
WHEN YOU THINK OF DIVERSITY, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF?	WHAT DOES OUR CONGREGATION DO TO SHED LIGHT ON OUR DESIRE FOR DIVERSITY?
Being different	Express a desire to be diverse
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Different thoughts	World Religions Studies
What "I am not"	Attendance growth as a result of 2 new
"Rubbing shoulders/elbows with others"	pastors
Economic differences	Inclusive staff
Generational differences	Trinity Tom Tom (email communications)
Educational differences	Great Variety of Sunday School offerings
Experience that we bring – what "got us here"	
"Melting Pot" or "Tossed Salad"	
"Shish Kabob"	

GROUP WORKSHOP # 2

Workshop Developing Congregational Survey - Oct. 12, 2004

After refreshments were served, the group reconvened by singing verse 2 of *Lift Every Voice*. The Individual Workshop Chart was reconstructed with the New Titles in four columns. The assignment was for each individual to write 2 to 4 questions for each new title, and to place them on this chart in the proper column.

BECOMING PARTICIPATORY CHURCH	CHANGING UNINVOLVED ATTITUDES	FEARING TRANSFORMATIONAL DIFFERENCES	WELCOMING ALL PEOPLE
1. On a scale of 1 to 10 (high), rank the importance you believe this church is to your Christian faith.	1. List 2 to 10 things preventing diverse people from attending Trinity.	1. How has Trinity helped you become more open minded?	1. Do you have a friend, neighbor, or work associate of a different ethnic or race group that you will invite to worship services?
2. What keeps you coming to church on Sunday?	2. Are you willing to try new worship experience to make people feel welcome?	2. On a scale of 1 to 10 (high) rank Trinity as a place of religious transformation.	2. List three ways that you are comfortable meeting or greeting others at services: 1) nod and smile 2) say <i>OH</i> ello 3) Actually engage in conversation?
3. In what ways do you welcome people of different cultures and races at church activities?	3. What can be done to overcome the fear and ignorance of diversity and change?	3. What program or classes could we offer to broaden our experience of diversity at Trinity?	3. Yes or No: Do you attempt to make everyone feel welcome?
4. In which way or ways do you feel the church is speaking to you?	4. List 2 to 10 things that encourages others to come to Trinity.	4. What do you have to lose by reaching out to others who are different from you?	4. How can we diversify our congregation?
5. How do you like to see it (the church) meet your needs?	5. Do you feel involved in what is happening at Trinity?	5. While we enjoy our present <input type="checkbox"/> comfort zones, <input type="checkbox"/> would you step out to participate in an ethnic-cultural Sunday festival?	5. How many times did you come to Trinity before you felt truly welcomed?
6. Do the hymns we sing and the choir selections reflect our desire for diversity?	6. Are you willing to look beyond your ideas and feelings to hear what others have to say?	6. Are we willing to meet simple changes: i.e., change where we sit, learning a new song, talking with strangers?	6. What does this Mission Statement mean to you?
7. How can children and youth be more involved in the worship service?	7. How do we assure others that the church belongs to all who desire to participate?	7. Is Trinity a welcoming church. Rank 1 to 10 (high)	7. How many people do you greet on Sunday morning? How many of them did you meet for the first time?
8. True or False: Do you feel that you are an active part of the worship service?	8. Finish this statement: <input type="checkbox"/> I don't like change because: . . . <input type="checkbox"/>	8. Yes or No. Are you comfortable with others who are different than you?	8. How do individual members assist in helping new attendees feel a desire and need to join?
9. How can we make our music during worship be more inclusive?	9. Are we willing to have open dialogues about diversity?	9. What steps should be taken to increase the level of diversity at Trinity?	9. How do we develop a sense of belonging together between 8:30 and 11:00 attendees?
10. How are we as a congregation including all ages, genders, etc. in our worship service? How can we do more?	10. How involved are you in the ministries/activities at Trinity? How? If not, what would you like to see happen to become involved?	10. In what ways would you approach someone of different race or culture and invite them to TUMC?	10. Will we seek out people of diversity to join our community?
11. What would you be willing to do to welcome people to Trinity?	11. Do you know the Mission Statement of Trinity UMC?	11. What can we do as a church to help us find comfort in our differences?	11. Rank 1 - 10 - Is Trinity a welcoming church?
12. Would you make any changes in the music?	12. List 3 ways TUMC can increase dialogue of diversity?	12. What scares or concerns you about changing the way we look at the dynamics at Trinity?	12. List 10 ways Trinity could be more welcoming of other groups and races in Salina.
13. True or False: Do you feel that participation from you is encouraged here at Trinity?	13. How can you become more involved at Trinity? How can you encourage others to be more involved?	13. Answer the question: <input type="checkbox"/> Am I willing to make a change in my church?	13. What are you willing to do to welcome all people to Trinity?
14. Do you have ideas to make worship more diverse/welcoming?		14. Are you in some way unhappy about your church? Do you have any suggestions how you can make this negative a positive?	14. In what ways do you see yourself making people of all ages and races to feel welcomed and wanted here at Trinity?
15. Do you come to worship to be fed or to worship God?			
16. In your experience, how has TUMC demonstrated its desire to achieve diversity?			
17. Why should Trinity UMC seek diversity?			

APPENDIX B

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEYS CONCERNING DIVERSITY

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY
Concerning Diversity and Trinity United Methodist Church
October 2004

1. Is Trinity a welcoming church? Rank 1 to 10 (high)

1 _____ 10
 Low
 High

2. List the things that encourages others to come to Trinity.

a. _____ b. _____
 c. _____ d. _____

3. Do we fulfill the following statement? "Therefore, we pledge ourselves to invite, receive, and value all people regardless of gender, race, age, culture, religious or ethnic background, sexual orientation, economic circumstance, family configuration, and difference in ability/" (from church brochure.)

YES: _____ NO: _____

4. How do we assure others that the church belongs to all who desire to participate?

5. While we enjoy our present "comfort zones," would you step out to participate in an ethnic-cultural Sunday festival?

YES: _____ NO: _____

6. How do individual embers assist in helping new attendees feel a desire and need to join?

7. What does this Mission Statement mean to you? OUR PURPOSE IS:

a. To have Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors by the people of Trinity UMC.

- b. To change the way we minister to others by not becoming too narrow in our hopes, dreams, and visions.
 - c. To identify and match the gifts and needs of the Trinity Community.
- 8. In your experience, how has TUMC demonstrated its desire to achieve diversity?"
- 9. How can we make our music during worship be more inclusive?
- 10. How has Trinity helped you become more open minded?
- 11. What program or classes can we offer to broaden our experience of diversity at Trinity?
- 12. Please add other comments or ideas concerning diversity within our church and its ministry.

YOUTH VERSION
CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY
 Concerning Diversity and Trinity United Methodist Church
 October 2004

1. Is Trinity a welcoming church. Rank 1 to 10 (high)

1 _____ 10
 Low High

2. List the things that encourage others to come to Trinity.
3. Do we fulfill the following statement? "Therefore, we pledge ourselves to invite, receive, and value all people regardless of gender, race, age, culture, religious or ethnic background, sexual orientation, economic circumstance, family configuration, and difference in ability/" *(from church brochure.)*
- YES _____ NO _____
4. How do we assure others that the church belongs to all who desire to participate?
5. While we enjoy our present □ comfort zones, would you step out to participate in an ethnic-cultural Sunday festival?
- YES _____ NO _____
6. How do individual members assist in helping new attendees feel a desire and need to join?
7. What does this Mission Statement mean to you? OUR PURPOSE is:
- a. To have Open Hearts, open Minds, and Open Doors by the people of Trinity UMC.
 - b. To change the way we minister to others by not becoming too narrow in our hopes, dreams, and visions.
 - c. To identify and match the gifts and needs of the Trinity Community.
8. In your experience, how has TUMC demonstrated its desire to achieve diversity?

9. How can we make our music during worship be more inclusive?
10. How has Trinity helped you become more open minded?
11. What program or classes can we offer to broaden our experience of diversity at Trinity?
12. Please add other comments or ideas concerning diversity within our church and its ministry.

The youth survey did not have this question.

APPENDIX C

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

➤ *Our Vision*

Trinity United Methodist Church is committed to providing spiritual nourishment, which promotes personal Christian growth and service

➤ *Our Purposes*

1. To have Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors by the people of Trinity UMC.
2. To change the way we minister to others by not becoming too narrow in our hopes, dreams, and visions.
3. To identify and match the gifts and needs of the Trinity Community.

➤ *Our Hopes and Dreams*

1. Trinity's Community Nurturing Foundations: Building more space; Nurturing God's people; Igniting individual spirituality.
2. Christian Service Without Limits: Exciting active youth; Extending caring services; Increasing Pastoral leadership; Teaching fun spirituality.
3. Teaming for Synergy (powerful cooperation): Increasing church attendance; Matching spiritual skills, Communicating, informed members.

➤ *Deep Barriers to Achieving our Vision, Purposes, Hopes, and Dreams*

1. [We have] not been invitational to [the] entry points for building Christian maturity;
2. Not supporting others in charge;
3. Have not surrendered the things we can't control;
4. Not explored the ways of New Revival;
5. Insufficient small groups.

APPENDIX D

COMMENTS/REACTIONS FROM SERMONS

The following are the comments/reactions from the October 17th sermon:

- To be a community of faith, we need to be looking for the difference in order to catch the likeness.
- Painted a working picture of Jesus – incomplete no body – body is the congregation in the church.
- There is strength in our diversity.
- A feeling of affirmation
- What does it mean to be the “body of Christ?”, it’s all of us believers.
- Body of Christ/Community of faith is an organism to do the ministry of Jesus Christ.
- Diversity in what we do and who we are.
- Need to be intentional about being inclusive
- Intentional about making us feel they are a part of the body of Christ.

The following are the comments/reactions from the October 24th sermon:

- As believers we have to understand, to know God, is to love others.
- We should love each other over, and over again.
- We are to worship God and not our hurt feelings. Which do we do?
- Heart felt, knows about love.
- Fred Phelps (anti-gay movement, Topeka, Kansas) does not know God. He needs to make a choice to love someone. Just give love a chance.
- Difference between liking and love. May not like actions, but need to love each other anyway.
- Using God's language can be very narrow in the way that we understand and see things.
- Paul and Jesus command us to love one another.
- Move away from not accepting people because of sexual orientation, where they fall on the social scale, or the color of their skin.
- Don't care how well one does their job, but hold back because of the color of their skin.
- Getting to know each other will transcend the barriers that prevent us from being family.
- Move away from stereotypes (judging one from the past, for example, the bearded males of the black panthers.)
- Erase stereotypical views by getting to know each other through worship and dialogue.
- Know the history – Black Panthers did some good things, the assisted feeding the hungry.
- Mother Nature needs diversity.
- Don't kill diversity – we need each other.
- Diversity is a gift of God.
- Treasure one another because we need each other.

APPENDIX E

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY OPENNESS TO DIVERSITY

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY
Openness to Diversity and Trinity United Methodist Church
October 2004

DEMOGRAPHICS: (All are approximations: Youth: 11; Ages 18-29:

10; Ages 30-49: 40; Ages 50-64: 30; Age 65 and older: 10).

1. Is Trinity a welcoming church? Rank 1 to 10 (high)

Summary Statement:

Trinity members rank themselves above average as a welcoming church. Taking into consideration both the median (the same number of responses above and below the median number), and the average of all responses is very close. All 91 respondents noted their evaluation in the following configurations: 1 rank at 2; 2 rank at 4; 9 rank at 5; 5 rank at 6; 16 rank at 7; 35 rank at 8; 14 rank at 9; and 9 rank at 10.

ADULT AND YOUTH COMBINED RANKS (91 responses)

Median ranking 1 _____ 7.00 _____ 10
Low

High

Average ranking 1 _____ 8.13 _____ 10
Low

High

YOUTH RANKINGS (for comparison purposes - 11 responses)

Median ranking 1 _____ 6.00 _____ 10
Low

High

Average ranking 1 _____ 6.72 _____ 10
Low

High

2. List the things that encourages others to come to Trinity.

Summary Statement:

Considerable analysis was given to this question. It seemed appropriate to do this deeper work because it revealed information appropriate for the topic of diversity as well as the rationale for why people select Trinity as their church.

OPEN DOORS: This represents the heart of "Fulfilling Our Purpose." There are three prime activities. "Diverse Entry Points" is supported by 95 entries from the original survey. There are three of this places of entry. "Music Opportunities" is the strongest; "Inclusive Programming" is the next entry point, and "Applied Diversity" is the third. You will note that a wide variety of programming is crucial. The promotion of diversity appears to be important both for the traditional Trinity membership as well as those ethnic, cultural and social representatives.

OPEN MINDS: This relationship consists of two arenas. The strongest arena in the relationship is "Welcoming and Invitatory." What is revealed here is that Trinity's style is one way people come to select Trinity. Our attractiveness is an emotional experience defined as an "atmosphere," and the very important activities of making certain that no interested person gets left behind. The lighter contributor to this relationship is that being involved in the Salina Community is important to Opening Minds. "Community Service Attracts," has two supporting activities: The first is the way volunteers are perceived as workers from Trinity. The second supporting activities is "Community Advertising." This surprised this reviewer. Evidently, advertising in the Salina Journal, the use of the church's Newsletter, and the church's website do play a role in encouraging new people to look at Salina, but it is what happens to them after they arrive that is more important.

OPEN HEARTS: This relationship consists of two arenas of almost equal importance. "In-depth Spiritual Care" is supported intrinsic activities. "Good Sermons," "Caring Community," and "Spiritual Environment," describes what newcomers can expect when they join Trinity. Structural things that do the work, i.e., "Strong Pastoral Leadership," and "Unique Black Leadership" support the arena of "Unique Pastoral Strength".

- 3. Do we fulfill the following statement?** "Therefore, we pledge ourselves to invite, receive, and value all people regardless of gender, race, age, culture, religious or ethnic background, sexual orientation, economic circumstance, family configuration, and difference in ability/" (from church brochure.)

Summary Statement:

Among those who responded to the Congregational Survey there is clear affirmation that this statement represents their views. This statement is reprinted from a brochure prepared by Trinity church.

YES: 74. NO: 6 MAYBE 8. NO ANSWER: 3

4. How do we assure others that the church belongs to all who desire to participate?

Summary Statement:

There are three general responses to this question. 1) Apparently, the strongest confirmation comes through the various places for people to participate in worship, study and service opportunities are expressed quite clearly. 2) The second confirmation comes through people practicing what they preach, and through a variety of accountability schemes. 3) An underlying philosophy is expressed that is used to confirm participation. The Mission Statement and Biblical injunctions help inform this confirmation. There is a warning attached to this as well: "Get away from cliques."

(Typical responses and the number of similar responses.)

17 responses: "Keep working at it." "By sharing more, letting others know that this is the way we feel." "Access TV." "Flyers." "Website."

14 responses: "Offer welcome and fellowship to those who come and participate."

11 responses: "Invite/include all ages, races, cultures." "Be open and inviting attitude to everyone by word of mouth and loving actions."

7 responses: "Not judge others—accept them for who they are." "Allow them to be them." "Treat others as you want to be treated."

6 responses: "By reminders from the pulpit."

7 responses: "Offer programs of education, music, worship and service opportunities." "Wide variety." "Be open to all realizing we all are different."

4 responses: "Sunday School and services and programs for diversity and fellowship."

4 responses: "Keep mission statement at the foreground and accountability," "Allow diversity and respect it."

3 responses: "Pastor available for counseling." "People need the Lord."

2 responses: "Program and mentors/guides for new members."

1 response: "Get away from cliques."

1 response: "Become more visible in the community."

1 response: "Show appreciation to others."

1 response: "I feel their maybe an economic status fracture within our groups." Also, 'marital status' may represent such a fracture."

1 response: "We can offer possibly an interfaith conference, or combine with other churches in order to be open to all."

5. While we enjoy our present "comfort zones," would you step out to participate in an ethnic-cultural Sunday festival?

Summary Statement:

Among those responding to the Congregational Survey is a consensus to hold an ethnic-cultural Sunday Festival.

YES: 85. NO: 1. MAYBE: 5

6. How do individual members assist in helping new attendees feel a desire and need to join?**Summary Statement:**

A process involving four elements is revealed in attracting new members. 1) The first is to raise the consciousness of the membership about the need to bring others into membership. 2) The second is to do the actual recruitment. This could promote the activity through individuals and/or through programs. 3) The third element is to develop a process through which new attendees receive a warm and cordial welcome. 4) The fourth element is quickly to get people involved in the life and ministry of the church.

(Typical responses and the number of similar responses.)

24 responses: "Be friendly and welcoming."

14 responses: "show real interest in others." "I introduce myself to people I don't know." "Serve their needs."

12 responses: "Join small groups—SS class, choir, fellowship group."

9 responses: "Match them up with something to do."

6 responses: "Follow up calls." "Invite to dinner." "Bring them with us." "Introduce them to others."

2 responses: "Do some training on how (to be welcoming)."

2 responses: "Calling on them."

1 response: Share in other social situations about TUMC."

1 response: "Membership Committee works to raise consciousness."

2 responses: "I don't know."

11 responses: No answer.

7. What does this Mission Statement mean to you? OUR PURPOSE IS:

- a. To have Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors by the people of Trinity UMC.
- b. To change the way we minister to others by not becoming too narrow in our hopes, dreams, and visions.
- c. To identify and match the gifts and needs of the Trinity Community.

Summary Statement:

Those responding to this Congregational Survey assigned to their answers four meanings. 1) The statement represents the challenge to be an open place where everyone can have needs met. 2) In the underlying philosophy

can be observed Biblical and practical admonishments, and ideals to be achieved.

Further, it is noted that the statement is not unanimously affirmed. One respondent noted that the Mission Statement is just a bunch of words. Other respondents observed that part “b” is inappropriately negative and used a phrase not clearly understood.

(Typical responses.)

1. “It means to be open to ALL in Salina or anywhere, to invite them to be part of us, and to grow in numbers, as well as spiritually—to nurture as we grow.”
2. “That we should set aside our preconceived notions and prejudice and interact and treat others as we would like to be treated?”
3. “We try to be accepting of all people who come here and reach out to people in our community.”
4. “a). Welcome everyone who comes here, inviting those who have no church home; b). Nurturing members who feel alienated for one reason or another; c). Continued search of time, talents and desires of individuals – this changes periodically.”
5. “A lofty mission statement. I’m trying to achieve it, but I do ‘backslide’ on occasion.”
6. “That this is a church where everyone is welcome. That we should keep our hearts, our minds, etc. open to everyone else and new ideas.”
7. “To truly be as Jesus was.”
8. “It (the statement) is idealistic and gives us something to reach for. It is a challenge.”
9. “It means everyone is welcome, accepted and nurtured as a valuable child of God.”
10. “That no one who wishes to come to Trinity will be turned away, and that we as a church are hoping to help, guide and teach everyone while not labeling ourselves as the ‘only way to do things.’”
11. “You surrender all to God; depend on him (*sic*).”
12. “My job is to accept and love all who I encounter. I need to welcome and invite. If I can, I should help people see how to serve the Lord.”
13. “That we, as a church, are open to all who wish to come here, that we are open-minded and faithful Christians, and that we will give of ourselves to ensure that the needs of the church are met.”
14. “We welcome any who wish to be apart of Trinity. We are not biased or prejudiced.”
15. “The words are mostly words—as mission statements usually are.”
16. “Comment: Part “b”: be rewritten in a more positive format. Negative (“by not becoming”) in mission statement should be avoided.”
17. “Good statement – maybe sermon on how purpose can be lived out.”
18. “Reminds us to walk the talk.”
19. “Don’t know what ‘too narrow’ means?” (in part “b”).
20. “Be willing to focus on God’s gifts to each of us (and to all people) regardless of any and all differences.”
21. “Ideally we would be there---realistically—we aren’t. I hope I can strive to be a part of being more open and serving.”

22. "I think it means we want to worship God with all of those who want to with open minds."
23. "God call us to love everyone."

30 responses: No answer.

8. In your experience, how has TUMC demonstrated its desire to achieve diversity?"

Summary Statement:

Those respondents answering the Congregational Survey noted that TUMC demonstrates its desire to achieve diversity in four ways. 1) This desire is advertised through personal word of mouth, and well as through advertisements in the local newspaper, the church's newsletter and its website. 2) There is an internal dimension to this as well. The membership needs motivation to train them, and to offer the appropriate programs and activities. 3) Practically, these programs and activities fall into two categories. First, the need is to demonstrate their desire for diversity through outreach activities such as the Red Bird Mission trip, the work accomplished at the Ellsworth Correctional Facility, and a growing openness to homosexuality. The second demonstration involves programs and activities offered within the church building, i.e., Inclusiveness Fairs, and sermons on the subject.

The responses also indicated that there are opposing views summed up in the statement, this area "need to be worked on."

(Typical responses.)

1. "Advertised by 'Kansas Reconciliation' as only church in Salina to be open to gays."
2. "Participate in M.L. King Day by having a task force devoted to this purpose."
3. "By opening its doors to everyone."
4. "By working at it."
5. "Mission experiences (Red Bird, Haiti, Ellsworth correctional Facility);" "Disciple experiences."
6. "Inclusiveness Fairs, World Religions studies, homosexuality study, providing wheel chairs."
7. "By having sermons and classes on the subject."
8. "The formation of an Inclusiveness Committee."
9. "We've invited people of different background and religions to speak to us. We have hired an African-American pastor who can reach out to a more diverse population."
10. "By doing things and changing things within the service and events outside the church, we show that we are not just doing the same things. Outside the box thinking breeds diversity."
11. "By greeting all and inviting all."
12. "No! Church has been the host of several diverse events. However, there are several individuals in the community that are not aware of the church's diversity reviews. When individuals come to worship and do not

- meet Trinity standards (unwritten) of appropriate dress, the congregation is hesitant to approach him/her (homeless, residents of Rescue Mission.)
13. "Sometimes. Need to be worked on."
 14. "Social opportunities, i.e., theater groups, game nights, pot lucks, etc."
 15. "Acceptance of a few homosexuals."
 16. "I believe that by welcoming Andrew with open arms, we have taken a giant step toward the way Christina worship should be (inclusion of all, not just some)."
 17. "I do not see that great strides have been made in admitting, acknowledging and addressing diversity. We talk it a little in the hallway outside of the church (sanctuary), but minimal action has been taken."
 18. "We have meetings to discuss the issue."
 19. "I haven't really seen a desire for diversity."

25 responses: No answer.

2 responses: "I don't know."

9. How can we make our music during worship be more inclusive?

The music program has an extraordinary place in the life of Trinity. According to this survey, the music program ranks second to "Diverse Programming." Three different approaches to this question can be observed. 1) Affirmations: The music program is a prime entry point for membership, it involves a broad range of ages, and there is an interest in involving representatives from other cultures. 2) Suggestions: The list below recognizes several requests to increase the diversity of hymnody as well as hymn styles. The list lifts up recommendation on changes to honor more diversity, such as gender concerns, as well as honoring various ethnic/culture groups on special days. 3) Practical suggestions: These observations promote methods for getting feedback from the congregation, as well as improvements to the projection of songs during the service.

(Typical responses.)

1. "Survey other cultural traditions to become more aware of their preferences."
2. "Making sure we can all sing it."
3. "I believe our present music program does an excellent job of presenting different types of music: folk group, chorus, bells, etc. Maybe some jazz would be a nice edition."
4. "By offering more contemporary music during worship."
5. "We have touched quite a few people that have joined the choir."
6. "By using other languages and traditions: be open to it all."
7. "Mix contemporary and traditional hymns. Use a variety of instruments in worship. Continue liturgical dance and other ways to express ourselves in worship."
8. "I would think VARIETY would be the key here. There is absolutely NOTHING that EVERYONE likes."
9. "Being careful not to use hymns that are exclusivistic."

10. "More diverse musicians and/or music, but to what end? More 'sing alongs?'"
11. "Invite person(s) outside our congregation to participate."
12. "Put a care in the pews to invite others to tell us if they are willing to share their musical talent."
13. "Song leader for new or unfamiliar songs."
14. "Suite the ages? Include ethnic standards."
15. "Use music to celebrate different ethnic and religious traditions. Highlight special Sundays like Native Am. Sunday or Black Studies week, Martin Luther King, etc."
16. "We are using projected words of hymns on a large screen. We have song leaders. We have 'multiple age' choir groups."
17. "As youth to participate."
18. "Have some Country Music."
19. "I think music is inclusive---Choir has even gone to the extent of changing lyrics from 'men' to 'all.'"
20. "Go to other church once in a while and see what they do."
21. "Recruit other cultures to sing in choirs."
22. "Make tapes available during the week for hymns for Sunday. Play music (for service) before service starts. Praise team to lead music. Music night once-a-month. Organize vocal group and or music group for 8:30 service in addition to Trinity Folk."
23. "Need wider variety of people to be involved in music than just the ordinary few."
24. "More praise songs with old hymns."
25. "Music from different cultures."
26. "Include more diverse instruments in the Power Company."
27. "More piano." "Percussion please." "Put woodwinds in there."
28. "Have Bell Choir perform more often."
29. "Try different styles."
30. "Make it easier to be involved. There is a lot of musical talent that goes undiscovered."
31. "Have the music come from different cultural backgrounds."
32. "Step away from such conservative music, bring in the 'new' wave of Christian music."
33. "Simply play something that is written after 1900."

26 responses: No answer.

1 response: "I don't know."

10. How has Trinity helped you become more open minded?

Summary Statement:

Those respondents answering this Congregational Survey strongly affirmed that Trinity helped them become more open-minded. Only one person noted a contrary belief. Trinity provided the following to help people come to a positive conclusion: 1) small group interaction; 2) confrontation with new data concerning diversity; 3) awakening to a new understanding of the Bible; 4)

awakening to a new understanding of the United Methodist theological positions.

(Typical responses.)

1. "Mainly through our Ages and Stages class."
2. "By welcoming people of other races to our services."
3. "Small group fellowship."
4. "I don't know. I have always been open minded."
5. "Sermons."
6. a). "Small group discussions;" b). Having friends here who are open to stimulating discussions and readings."
7. "Given me the opportunity to know people who are different than me."
8. "Having various members share their experiences in regard to homosexuality, alcoholics and faith testimony."
9. "For instance – prison group."
10. "Being clearer that the bottom line is "God would not exclude anyone.""
11. "By studying the Gospels and being in a SS class of diverse ages and religious backgrounds."
12. "We tend to get a bit over the edge on politics—too bad we aren't all as accepting when it isn't our religion in question."
13. "Being on Task Forces of different kinds."
14. "It has reinforced by belief that there are many roads up the mountain."
15. "Through its ministry."
16. "I feel I'm probably pretty open minded, but will not go against by biblical belief."
17. "Trinity supports Christ's commandment to 'love one another,' and "Love thy neighbor.' Love takes priority over all other issues and opinions."
18. "Probably not."
19. "By showing the differences are not important."
20. "I feel that through being a part of Disciple I've gained more knowledge about our Bible and look at this world and church from a different aspect. I have also seen the service that is done with the mission trip and compassion given to others."
21. "Taught me to work better w/everyone and agree w/ other people's beliefs."
22. "I have come in contact w/ people I normally wouldn't talk to, and they turned out to be really cool."
23. "By introducing new stuff to me."
24. "Taught me that in God's eyes everyone is equal and to treat others how you want to be treated."

19 responses: No answer.

11. What program or classes can we offer to broaden our experience of diversity at Trinity?

Summary Statement:

Essentially, this question resulted in a brainstorm of information. In order to broaden the exposure of the congregation to more experiences of diversity, the data is divided into two kinds of recommendations, activities and studies. The activities encompass retreat, support groups, exchanges, workshops, and speakers. The studies involve Disciple Classes and book reviews. Also, the list included a special plea for marriage and parenting classes, along with the suggestion of public advertising of programs. Only one response was negative, observing, "I just don't feel diversity here."

(Typical responses.)

1. "Cultural exchanges—send two couples to Quayle for a month in exchange for two couples from Quayle."
2. "I'm not sure."
3. "We've had some—have more—publicize it so folks will know of special quests."
4. "A study of world religions."
5. "Inviting people from different countries to share something of their lives in. . . Like a show and tell."
6. "Speakers with different perceptions and perspectives."
7. "Perhaps a workshop on exclusivity and diversity."
8. "Retreats away from church."
9. "Marriage classes, Please." "How t serve God together and as a family."
10. "Parenting class."
11. "I just don't feel diversity here."
12. "Just a better system for getting all socio-econ. Levels represented and feeling welcome/included."
13. "Disciple classes."
14. "Book review. Films. Demonstrations on how to! Photos."
15. "I believe we have enough now. They just need to be fine tuned."
16. "I am still disappointed that the 18+ Young People Class could not be encouraged more. Maybe we need to look at what the Church of the Servant is doing in this area in Edmond, Oklahoma."
17. "We should do more community outreach. This would expose more people to our church and our members."
18. "Support groups."
19. "World Religions social awareness, what can we don in the community to encourage and support all peoples?"
20. "Monthly (or more often) cultural focus—start with Trinity and build toward community involvement. The Martin Luther King celebration last year at Trinity was very poorly represented."
21. "Beginners class on Methodism."
22. "Language classes."
23. "Welcome all ages to come to the diversity meetings we have."
24. "A class about diversity in Christ."

34 responses: No answer.

1 response: "I don't know."

12. Please add other comments or ideas concerning diversity within our church and its ministry.

Summary Statement:

Since Question 12 is an extension of ideas from Question 11, it is expected that a similar break out of material be listed. It is true that the following brainstorm involves activities, i.e., studies concerning cultural language and differences, and personal testimonies from different groups, and studies, i.e., religious explorations, a Spanish emphasis, and Christian testimonies from various sub-groups and cultures.

Two important additions are discerned: 1) two practical implementations to be taken: a community bus program, and 2) a specific invitation made to those who have left Trinity in the past, requesting their return. In addition to this material several criteria forming a sociological and theological basis is explored; such as, being non-judgmental, and exploring interactive occasions between Trinity and those of other cultures and/or ideas.

(Typical responses.)

1. "Offer another religion exploration class—comparing/contrasting Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, etc."
2. "Think about adding a Spanish service with a Spanish-Speaking pastor. Korean? Vietnamese?"
3. "Offer Spanish classes."
4. "Christian testimony by gays, other cultures, etc."
5. "Maybe have conservative religious persons come and share faith on marriage issues, on abortion, on religious diversity."
6. "Festivals celebrating various ethnic, racial holidays or feasts."
7. "I would love to see an open house of hobbies people have that are church members."
8. "We need to be committed to have open, non-judgmental leadership. I believe we have this now and my heart rejoices. We should only be worried about loving others, accepting others, and not w/ judgment."
9. "Perhaps making child care available for meetings during the week."
10. "Concentrate on the Bible and its application – we should accept all people as God's children and not as who they are as a world classification."
11. "We should never become too 'pushy' in our theology. It needs to be implanted in us."
12. "I think the pictorial directory is important."
13. "We need to send a group to Church of the Servant in Edmond to take a retreat to look at their programming. They have much diversity and outreach into the community and the world. Also, you can get on their newsletter list and receive their outstanding newsletter."
14. "Even though we reach out to certain people of different color or persuasions there are those of similar like-mindedness who feel 'outside' the 'community of believers.' We need to care for these people as well."

15. "Tolerance for other ideas, even within Methodism, is needed to strengthen our TUMC church and our denomination."
16. "Maybe we could run buses around town to pick up the elderly and children whose parents don't, or won't attend."
17. "We need to invite those back that have left Trinity in the last few years."
18. "I am concerned that many of our members fake diversity as an assumption, or (that it is) 'not a problem.' The reality may be a lack of knowledge and understanding of/for diversity."
19. "Encourage our children and youth to be aware of diversity and its importance of 'Love your neighbors; all of them.'"
20. "Also, while diversity is important, I don't believe it should be the sole focus of the church. Personal faith experience/development is equally, if not more, important as is mission."

50 responses: No answer.

APPENDIX F

RESULTS REFLECTIVE/STATEMENT DIALOGUE

The following is the results of the reflective questions/statement dialogue.

The group shared openly and objectively on the concerns that interested them most.

- There is strength in diversity.
- The body of Christ is incomplete without all of God's people.
- Diversity should be what we live and do.
- We need each other and should affirm each other.
- We should be intentional about being diverse.
- We should be sensitive to what others are feeling.
- We should work at being totally non-judgmental.
- We should be committed to cultural pluralism.
- We should work at embracing new experiences through study and dialogue.
- Understand the different ways that people do things.
- We need to find ways to experience each other.
- Work to understand your personal faith.
- Identify ways in which you are fostering relationships with persons who are different from you.
- Suspend judgment of others.
- Seek to be a "real community" of faith with all of God's children.
- Seek to understand one's self so that we can understand others.
- Be intentional about church school, worship, and service to others.
- The importance of biblical and relevant preaching.
- Be intentional about accepting and inviting new persons to our church of all racial backgrounds.
- Be intentional about adapting to new ways.
- Dropping the statement, "we have always done it this way."
- Seeing things through new lenses.
- Studying world religion
- Inclusive music and liturgy.
- Seize the opportunity to dialogue with all groups of people.

The group felt that the reflective dialogue was helpful. They felt that the congregation has experienced a change and has begun to open themselves to other racial groups as evidenced by the presence of those persons in our worship service.

APPENDIX G

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY REFLECTION WORKSHOP

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY REFLECTION WORKSHOP

Discussion on November 9, 2004

Andrew's Contextual Associates

1. What things do you remember about the survey?

- Doing a lot now, but lots left to do.
- Exciting about diversity.
- Pride about diversity.
- People able to see United Methodist values.
- Youth don't feel that we are welcoming.
- Criticism was constructive.
- Survey resulted in youth thinking of ways to become more involved.
- Has been a stimulating experience.

2. What was the congregation's response to the survey?

Has been thought provoking.

3. What was your impression about how congregation took the survey?

- Took the survey seriously.
- Wanted more time to answer questions.

4. How should we make results available?

Copies to classrooms, youth, Inclusiveness committee, new youth minister, brief summary in newsletter, post survey on the web site and have hard copies available.

5. Other observations

- Andrew's sermons received good response from congregation.
- As changes are made to the survey, then this needs to be referenced and associated to this survey.
- Need to remember that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Sunday school attendees did not participate in doing the survey because of other commitments.

Congregational Survey

October 31, 2004

CHART ONE
PRIORITY CHART
Potential Entry Points For New And Diverse Members

Question # 2

A Things that encourages others to come to Trinity ≡

Welcoming Atmosphere 62 items	Inclusive Programming 53 items	Music Opportunities 48 items	Spiritual Nourishment 30 items	Invitatory Welcoming 24 items	Strong Pastors 22 items	Applied Diversity 15 items	Applied Style 10 items	Community Involvement 8 items	Community Advertising 7 items
	Programs to involve individual and families 36		Caring Community 13	Invitatory 14	Strong Pastors 18		Liberal Beliefs 5	Community Involvement 6	Newspaper Ads 4
	Children=s classes, and VBS 10	Music Involvement and programming 48	Good Sermons 10	Friends Attend 8		Diversity Welcome 15	Facility Location 4		Church Newsletter 1
	Youth Involvement 7		Spiritual Environment 7	Example: others 2	Unique Pastors 3		Casual/ Formal style 1	Community Reputation 2	Church Website 1
									Facility Outside-use 1

CHART TWO

RATIONAL/RELATIONAL CHART

Arena IV --- The Church Grows When We Fulfill Our Purpose

Question # 2

Arena III - Through

OPEN HEARTS

Arena III - Through		O P E N H E A R T S		
Arena II - Through		O P E N M I N D S		
		Arena I - Through O P E N D O O R S		
No. 12 In-Depth Spiritual Care 30 items	No. 4 Welcoming and Invitatory 96 items	No. 1 Diverse Entry Points 116 items	No. 7 Community Service Attracts 15 items	No. 9 Unique Pastoral Strength 21 items
No. 11 Caring Community 13 items	No. 5 Welcoming Atmosphere 62 items	No. 2 Inclusive Programming 53 items	No. 8 Community Involvement 8 items	No. 10 Pastoral Leadership 18 items
No. 13 Good Sermons 10 items	No. 6 Invitatory Welcoming 24 items	No. 3 Music Opportunities 48 items	No. 10 Community Advertising 7 items	
No. 13 Spiritual Environment 7 items	No. 6 Applied Style 1 items	No. 3 Applied Diversity 15 items	No. 8 Community Advertising 7 items	No. 10 Unique Pastors 3 items

2. List the things that encourage others to come to Trinity, from the Openness to Diversity Congregational Survey (Appendix E).

Chart Three: Characteristic Statements

The following are quotations from the responses given to question # 2 in the Congregational Survey. These are representative quotes, and are not exhaustive. They are printed here to illustrate the three major relationships that unite all of the 241 responses.

I. OPEN DOORS

1. "Great music."
2. "Children's activities."
3. "Offer several services, i.e., two Sunday services and the Wednesday evening Spiritual Swim Team."
4. "Accepting of non-traditional views."
5. "Dynamic African-American (black) pastor."
6. "Many opportunities for all age groups and interests to participate in one or more aspects of our music program."
7. "Church Staff."
8. "Celebrating ethnic holidays and cooking."

II. OPEN MINDS

1. "Welcoming atmosphere – inside and outside of the church building."
2. "Knowing other people who come here."
3. "Example in our daily lives."
4. "We are open to others."
5. "Community reputation is for all."
6. "Lots of youth involvement."
7. "Our dress is from causal to classy."
8. "People receive warm greetings from #;s of people."
9. "Friendly/Fun when you come."
10. "We get exposure in our community."
11. "Progressive theology."
12. "Our volunteers work in the community."
13. "Never judged."

III. OPEN HEARTS

1. "Spiritual needs met."
2. "Good preaching. . . good understandable sermons."
3. "Caring individuals within the congregation."
4. "Deep feelings in the service."
5. "People are hearing good things about us."
6. "We are accepting of all people."
7. "We accept non-traditional views."
8. "Direct outreach."

Charts Explanations

(Looking at these charts will make the following meaningful.)

I. Chart One: Priority Chart- Potential Entry Points For New and Diverse Members

The 91 respondents listed Two hundred forty one items. Of these 10 categories were identified. Following this regrouping, these 10 categories were given a two-word title. The category receiving the largest number of items was listed first, the second largest next, and so on. What this chart reveals is that the first five categories give us the prime reasons for attending Trinity: "Welcoming Atmosphere;" "Music Opportunities;" "Inclusive programming;" "Spiritual Nourishment;" and an "Invitatory Welcoming." The difference between being "invitatory" and being "welcoming" is one of emotional perception. The last five categories are: "Strong Pastors;" "Applied Diversity;" "Community Involvement;" "Applied Style;" and "Community Advertising."

II. Chart Two: Rationale/Relational Chart- The Church Grows When We Fulfill Our Purpose

The Rationale Chart is a method of identifying the central core activities ("Diverse Entry Points"), and in this case, the four supporting sub-core activities ("Welcoming and Invitatory;" "Community Service Attracts;" in-depth Spiritual Care;" and "Unique Pastoral Strength."

Again, the 10 categories were regrouped into similar information and given a new title. The items below the new titles are a re-listing of this information. The work above the new titling seeks to discover the relationships between all 10 categories (now in five new arenas), and then names the four relationships. Happily, this work could make good use of United Methodism's slogan of "Open Doors," "Open Minds," and Open Hearts." The over-all relational title is, "The Church Grows When We Fulfill Our Purpose."

III. Chart Three: Characteristic Statements

Using the United Methodist slogan, sample quotes were copied to support the various new arenas, and its numerated categories.

What is learned from this exercise?

The Rationale Chart two reveals the importance of the church leadership not to neglect this information. The five arenas are crucial to maintaining the momentum to keep the church growing and to encourage a more diverse membership.

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